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ADDIS'S HEBREW RELIGION

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HEBREW RELIGION  
TO THE ESTABLISHMENT  
OF JUDAISM UNDER EZRA

BY W. E. ADDIS, M.A.

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1906

TO

E. L. A.

## PREFACE

IT need scarcely be said that this little volume can make no claim to originality. It is simply an attempt to provide the general reader with a clear statement of fact on the history of Hebrew religion down to the middle of the fifth century B.C. In such a work references to modern authorities would have been out of place, and to give such references with anything like fulness would have been impossible in the space at command. It may, however, be well to say that my account of early Arabic religion has been drawn chiefly, except where other references are given, from Wellhausen's "*Reste des arabischen Heidenthums.*" Some apology may be requisite for my frequent use of Greek and Latin authors. The quotations have always been made directly from my own reading at the time, reading which was undertaken without any thought of the Old Testament. For this reason they may seem

## Preface

to convey information which is too familiar to be of much use. Yet the very fact that they are drawn from the most accessible sources may remind the reader how easy it is to discover points of contact between Semitic and Aryan religions, in their primitive stages. No doubt, in their subsequent course they drifted far from each other.

I have tried to exercise an independent judgment, to distinguish conjecture from proof, and to furnish the reader with the means of judging for himself. If we deal honestly and fearlessly with the facts we shall assuredly find, that all real investigation ministers to revealed truth by helping us to understand how the light, faint and dim in its beginning, grew more and more till it reached the perfect day in Him who is “Light of Light, very God of very God.”

OXFORD, *Easter 1906.*

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# CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

*[The dates given are all B.C.]*

## *A. THE MOSAIC PERIOD AND THE HISTORY OF THE NATION TILL ITS CONTACT WITH THE GREAT EASTERN EMPIRES*

Exodus from Egypt—perhaps about 1250.

Somewhat later the nomad life in the wilderness.

The gradual conquest of Canaan by the Hebrews and their settlement there, beginning with the Judges and completed under the first Kings.

The consolidation of the tribes under David and Solomon—1000 to 932.

Ahab and Elijah, Jehu and Elisha—about 850.

## *B. THE ASSYRIAN AND BABYLONIAN PERIOD*

### *(a) The Assyrian Period*

Amos, *circ.* 760; Hosea, between 746 and 734; Isaiah, 740–700; Micah, before 722.

Tiglath Pileser III., King of Assyria—745–727.

Menahem, King of Israel, becomes tributary to Assyria—738.

Syro-Ephraimitic War against Judah—735. Ahaz of Judah tributary to Assyria.

## Chronological Table

Tiglath Pileser III. seizes Gilead, &c., and destroys Damascus—733, 732.

Samaria taken by Sargon of Assyria, 722.

Sennacherib of Assyria invades Judah: Jerusalem delivered—701.

Esar-haddon of Assyria invades Egypt—about 670.

Between 850 and 750 the Jahvist and Elohist documents which form the oldest parts of the Pentateuch were perhaps reduced to writing.

### (β) *Decline of Assyria: Rise of Babylon*

Zephaniah, *circ.* 630; Nahum and Joshua, *circ.* 625; Jeremiah, 627–586; Habakkuk, *circ.* 605.

Nineveh threatened by Medes and Babylonians.

Scythian invasion of Western Asia. Jeremiah begins his prophecies—627.

Promulgation of the Deuteronomic Code—621.

Necho, King of Egypt, marches against Assyria: Josiah encountering him, is defeated and slain at Megiddo—608.

Nineveh taken by Cyaxares, the Mede, and Nabopolassar of Babylon—606.

Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar, defeats Necho at Carchemish—605.

Jehoiakim of Judah and many of his chief men carried in captivity to Babylon—597.

### C. PERIOD OF THE EXILE (586–538)

Ezekiel (592–570) belongs in part to the earlier years of this period and Second Isaiah—*i.e.* Isa. xl.–lv.—to its conclusion.

# Chronological Table

## D. RETURN FROM THE EXILE AND RESTORATION OF JEWISH COMMUNITY UNDER PERSIAN RULE

### (a) *Persian Kings*

Cyrus, 559–529.  
Cambyses, 529–522.  
Darius (after struggle with pseudo-Smerdis, &c.), 521–486.  
Xerxes, 485–465.  
Artaxerxes, 465–424.

### (β) *Jewish History*

Return of many Jews under Zerubbabel and Joshua, the chief priest—538.

Prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah—520–519.  
Second Temple completed—516.  
Ruth, Malachi, and Third Isaiah—*i.e.* Isa. lvi.–lxvi.—probably belong to this time.

Return of 1800 male Jews with Ezra—458.  
Nehemiah goes as governor to Jerusalem and builds the city wall—445.

Proclamation and solemn acceptance of the Priestly Code—444.

Nehemiah's second visit to Jerusalem.

Pentateuch in its present form completed by union of priestly document with older history and legislation—viz. the Jahvist and Elohist, besides Deuteronomy in an expanded form—400 (?).

## Chronological Table

Erection of Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim—  
perhaps about 333.

Reception of Hebrew Pentateuch with alterations by  
Samaritan community about the same time.

To the Persian period many scholars assign Job,  
Proverbs (in its present form), some of the Psalms,  
Obadiah, Jonah, Joel.

## CRITICAL TABLE

### THE HEXATEUCH, *i.e.*, THE PENTATEUCH AND JOSHUA.

THE following list of passages, belonging to the Priestly Writer, is taken from Dr. Driver's Introduction, and represents the general opinion of scholars. If we subtract these, and also nearly the whole of the Book of Deuteronomy, the remainder belongs to the older documents, *i.e.*, to the Jahvist and Elohist histories.

*Genesis* i. i.-ii. 4<sup>a</sup>; v. 1-28, 30-32; vi. 9-22; vii. 6, 7-9 (in parts), 11, 13-16<sup>a</sup>, 18-21, 24; viii. 1-2<sup>a</sup>, 3<sup>b</sup>-5, 13<sup>a</sup>, 14-19; ix. 1-17, 28-29; x. 1-7, 20, 22-23, 31-32; xi. 10-27, 31-32; xii. 4<sup>b</sup>-5; xiii. 6, 11<sup>b</sup>-12<sup>a</sup>; xvi. 1<sup>a</sup>, 3, 15-16; xvii. xix. 29; xxi. 1<sup>b</sup>, 2<sup>b</sup>-5; xxiii.; xxv. 7-11<sup>a</sup>, 12-17, 19-20, 26<sup>b</sup>; xxvi. 34-35; xxvii. 46—xxviii. 9; xxix. 24, 29; xxxi. 18<sup>b</sup>; xxxiii. 18<sup>a</sup>; xxxiv. 1-2<sup>a</sup>, 4, 6, 8-10, 13-18, 20-24, 25 (partly), 27-29; xxxv. 9-13, 15, 22<sup>b</sup>-29; xxxvi. (mostly); xxxvii. 1-2<sup>a</sup>; xli. 46; xlvi. 6-27; xlvii. 5-6<sup>a</sup> (lxx.), 7-11, 27<sup>b</sup>-28; xlviii. 3-6, 7 (?) ; xlix. 1<sup>a</sup>, 28<sup>b</sup>-33; l. 12-13.

*Exodus* i. 1-7, 13-14, 23<sup>b</sup>-25; vi. 2-7; vii. 13, 19-20<sup>a</sup>; 21<sup>b</sup>-22; viii. 5-7, 15<sup>b</sup>-19; ix. 8-12; xii. 1-20, 28, 37<sup>a</sup>; 40-51; xiii. 1-2, 20; xiv. 1-4, 8-9, 15-18, 21<sup>a</sup>, 21<sup>c</sup>-23,

# Critical Table

26, 27<sup>a</sup>, 28<sup>a</sup>, 29 ; xvi. 1-3, 6-24, 31-36 ; xvii. 1<sup>a</sup> ; xix. 1-2<sup>a</sup> ; xxiv. 15-18<sup>a</sup> ; xxv. 1—xxxii. 18<sup>a</sup> ; xxxiv. 29-35 ; xxxv.-xl.

*Leviticus* the whole, except that most of xvii.-xxvi. belong to the “Law of Holiness.”

*Numbers* i. i.-x. 28 ; xiii. 1-17<sup>a</sup>, 21, 25-26<sup>a</sup> [to “Paran”], 32<sup>a</sup> ; xiv. 1-2 (mostly), 5-7, 10, 26-38 (mostly) ; xv. ; xvi. 1<sup>a</sup>, 2<sup>b</sup>-7<sup>a</sup>, 18-24, 27<sup>a</sup>, 32<sup>b</sup>, 35, 36-40, 41-50 ; xvii.-xix. xx. 1<sup>a</sup> (to “month”), 2, 3<sup>b</sup>, 6, 12-13, 22-29 ; xxi. 4<sup>a</sup> (to “Hor”), 10-11 ; xxii. 1 ; xxv. 6-18 ; xxvi.-xxxii. xxxii. 18-19, 28-32 ; xxxiii.-xxxvi.

*Deuteronomy* xxxii. 48-52 ; xxxiv. 1<sup>a</sup>, 8-9.

*Joshua* iv. 13, 19 ; v. 10-12 ; vii. 1 ; ix. 15<sup>b</sup>, 17-21 ; xiii. 15-32 ; xiv. 1-5 ; xv. 1-13, 28-44, 48-62 ; xvi. 4-8 ; xvii. 1<sup>a</sup>, 3-4, 7, 9<sup>a</sup>, 9<sup>c</sup>-10<sup>a</sup> ; xviii. 1, 11-28 ; xix. 1-8 ; 10-46, 48, 51 ; xx. 1-3 (except “and unawares,”) 6<sup>a</sup> (to “judgment”), 7-9 (Comp. lxx.) ; xxi. 1-42 ; xxii. 9-34.

The *Law of Holiness* is contained for the most part in Lev. xvii.-xxvi., though this section has received many additions in the style and spirit of the later Priestly Code. There is also reason to believe that the kernel of Lev. i.-v., xi.-xv., Num. v. 5-31, vi. 1-21, ix. 9-15, xv., xix. may come from the “Law of Holiness.” Exodus xxxi. 13-14<sup>a</sup> may be an excerpt from the same document.

*The Prophets*.—Whereas there is general agreement on the criticism of the Hexateuch, there is still much uncertainty on the authenticity of large portions in the prophetic books.

## Critical Table

*Amos*.—Probably the consolatory conclusion ix. 8–15 is a later addition, and the same may be said of the doxologies iv. 13; v. 8, 9; ix. 5, 6, which infer the glory and power of Jehovah from the works of nature. Some passages of this kind have no real connection with the context. The vague reference to the sin of Judah ii. 4, 5 cannot be authentic.

*Hosea*.—Many scholars deny that the consolatory conclusion xiv. 2–9 is authentic, though the objections here are much less cogent than in the parallel case from Amos. Here, also, but much more often, references to Judah have been inserted (*see* especially i. 7) and the name Judah has been substituted for Israel. The belief that the northern kingdom was schismatic is expressed in iii. 5, but cannot be attributed to the real Hosea.

*Isaiah*.—Nothing after xxxiii. is his work, and xi. 10–xiv. 23, xv., xvi., xxi. 1–10, xxiv.–xxvii. are not from his hand. The following passages are undoubtedly authentic: (1) From the prophet's call to the Syro-Ephraimitic war—*i.e.*, from 740 to 734; vi. ii. 6–iv. i. (in part); v. 1–24; ix. 7–20; v. 26–29; vii. 1–14, 16; viii. 1–4, 5–8<sup>a</sup>, 11–15, 16–18; xvii. 1–11. (2) From the year 711 when Sargon besieged Ashdod; xviii.; xx. (3) From the time of Sennacherib's invasion, xxii.; xxviii.–xxx. (allowing for interpolation); i. This list represents the minimum of genuine matter.

*Micah*.—Only the first three chapters are certainly his.

*Zephaniah*.—The authenticity of ii. 4–15, iii. 9–10, 14–20 is at least doubtful.

## Critical Table

*Jeremiah* xlvi.-ii. is not authentic; of the rest only portions come from the prophet and from his secretary. The subject is too complicated and disputable to be treated here in detail.

*Habakkuk* iii. is not genuine. For a view of Habakkuk's date different from that given in the Chronological Table, see Budde's article in the "Encyclopædia Biblica."

No critical difficulty of historical importance arises with regard to any of the other prophetic writings, except Daniel, which is much later than the period embraced in this volume. The needful information on the Second and Third Isaiah has been given in the text.

# HEBREW RELIGION

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

*The Subject of Inquiry and its Interest.—* It is the purpose of this little volume to trace the development of Hebrew religion down to the publication of the Pentateuch in its present form. It is not necessary to dwell at any great length on the importance of the subject. It has been said that the Hebrews had a unique genius for religion, as the Greeks had a unique genius for art in its widest sense, as the Romans had for government and law. Many of us would desire to express this fact in religious terms: to us the Hebrews hold a solitary place in the history of religion, because to them “the oracles of God were committed.” Still here

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at the outset we may be content with a statement which assuredly does not err by exaggeration. It is reasonable to feel the attractive power of the Old Testament, because it expresses in classical form truths which have exercised great influence on the central forces of human life, and because it appeals at this hour to the deepest and the loftiest convictions of our nature. It is true that truths which Hebrew saints attained with toil and struggle and suffering have long since become familiar in Christendom, *i.e.* in the most civilised and progressive portion of mankind. Just, however, for this reason we are apt to repeat them without any lively sense of their real meaning, any adequate notion of the severe claims which they make upon us. Now we find a way of escape from this conventionality when we try to recall the momentous import of these truths to those who uttered them at the first, the surprise, the awe, the attractive and the repulsive power which they had for some who caught them as they fell from the lips of prophet or of psalmist. Nor can we value

## Introductory

the light in which we live at its just rate till we also know the darkness from which it emerged, growing more and more till it reached the perfect day in Him who is the light of the world. Here we may remark that the Old Testament loses less by translation than any other ancient book. The construction of the language is so simple that it can be reproduced almost verbally in our own tongue: even the metre is of such a nature that it can to a great extent be preserved in a fairly literal translation. We cannot say as much of any great Greek or Roman writer. Translations of the Greek and Roman classics are useful chiefly to those who are familiar with the originals. No attempt to make Homer popular in an English dress has proved successful. Pope's Homer is probably indebted for the large number of its readers to the fact that it is not Homer: if correct translations of Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus have been widely appreciated, it is because they wrote long after the classical epoch, and had few graces of style to forfeit in the process of translation.

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*The Method of Inquiry must be Historical.*—Such is the subject which lies before us, and the method of inquiry, already implied, must now be stated more fully. We are entitled to ask what the Koran teaches on the nature and will of God, on the creation and preservation of the world, on the prophetic office of Mohammed, on the duties of believers to their brethren and to the infidel. We may reasonably do so, because the Koran is a single book, and not very long after Mohammed's death its various chapters were committed to writing and assumed approximately their present shape. Critics of the Koran have done the chief part of their work, when they have arranged the chapters in chronological order, and so enabled us to trace the development of ideas in Mohammed's mind and the connection of this development with the changes in his environment. With the Old Testament it is altogether different. Here we are concerned not with a book but with a whole literature extending over many ages. Its authors lived under a great variety of out-

## Introductory

ward circumstance, differed from each other in spiritual experience and attainment, and held views on the nature of God and man which belong to opposite poles of thought. No doubt, there is a bond of unity between the component parts of the Old Testament which justifies us with certain precautions and reserves in treating it as one book. The nature of Jehovah and the demands which He makes upon His worshippers is the central idea from first to last. But this germ of thought underwent a long course of evolution. Criticism enables us to see how a tribal religion became national and tended to become universal, how a crude materialism was refined little by little into spiritual notions of God and of the worship which is due to Him. Let the student read Exodus iv. 24-26 where Jehovah meets Moses on the way back to Egypt, seeks to slay him, and is appeased by the blood of the circumcision. Then let him turn to the immortal words in Micah vi., "What doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with

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thy God?" and he can scarcely fail to see how far he has travelled and to recognise the width of intervening space between the starting-point and the goal of Hebrew religion. It is this long progress and its continuance in spite of, nay, by means of, the obstacles in its path which separates the revelation made to Israel from all natural religions. Elsewhere—*e.g.* in the Greek tragedians—there are flashes of light and glimpses of religious truth: but there is nothing parallel to the process by which Israel's religion was purified and enlarged without any diminution of its intense belief in the unity and personality of the God who had directed its history and led it by a way it knew not. There are other reasons which make it impossible to study Hebrew religion apart from the national history. God did not reveal Himself to the people directly. He "spoke to the fathers by the prophets." Hebrew nationality and Hebrew religion alike begin with Moses the prophet: each step in advance is made by the action of the divine Spirit in Jehovah's chosen servants and

## Introductory

messengers. Nor did God turn these men into mechanical instruments of His will. Jeremiah, for example, remains from first to last a singularly natural character. He is a man of strong emotions which lie open before us on the written page, and grace did not destroy nature but perfect it. We have to acquaint ourselves with his tenderness of feeling and sensitive shrinking from strife, with his love and pity for his people, his passionate hatred of wrong, his sense of loneliness which cut so deep, if we would understand the way in which God trained him for the work and message of his life. Once more, it was through the history of their nation and of those great empires which destroyed the political and threatened the religious life of Israel, that the prophets came to fuller apprehension of the divine nature. They did not utter their belief in abstract shape: there is very little in the genuine text of the prophets before the exile which clothes itself in the dogmatic forms of a later day. They do not expatiate on God's omnipotence and omniscience, or upon

## Hebrew Religion

His spiritual nature. They think of Him as the righteous will who instructs His people by the events of history, warns and exhorts them by the overthrow of dynasties and the crash of empires. We cannot, therefore, in studying the prophets, draw any sharp line of demarcation between sacred and profane history. Lastly, it must be remembered that the earlier prophets address the nation as a whole: it is to the whole nation that Jehovah speaks, and He requires "righteousness in the gates," *i.e.* just institutions equitably administered. It is the nation as a whole which is rewarded with prosperity or punished with disaster. For this reason, if for no other, prophecy cannot be read intelligently apart from the political events of the time. Of course, all this must not be taken to mean that there is no difference between a sketch of Hebrew religion and an account of Hebrew history. For our present purpose it will suffice to mark the chief epochs in national history and to explain their influence on religion. Many details which are interesting from a

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secular point of view may be dismissed lightly or passed over altogether. The history of Greek art in connection with the political history of Greece would exhibit a method more or less parallel to that which we shall try to follow here.

*Chief Divisions in the History.*—It will be well to indicate at the outset the chief stages on the road. Israel's religion did not end like natural religions, but it begins where they begin. Consequently we shall deal first with those ideas which the Hebrew inherited from prehistoric times. Partly these usages are common to mankind, or at least to a large portion of it, in savage times and in the infancy of civilisation: partly they are peculiar to the races which were allied by blood and speech to the Hebrews. Next we shall have to deal with the creative work of Moses and the way in which Jehovah came to be accepted as the sole God of the Hebrew tribes. Thence we shall pass to the settlement in Canaan and to the influence which agriculture and contact with the higher civilisation of the

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Canaanites exercised on the religion and morality of Canaan. We shall also consider the realisation of national unity by the institution of the monarchy, appending a general view of Hebrew religion before it was transformed and transfigured by the teaching of the prophets. Afterwards we shall come to the prophets themselves, to Elijah and Elisha, and, above all, to the great literary prophets who lived before the exile, and whose works constitute the golden age of Hebrew literature. Another chapter will deal in rapid succession with the Deuteronomic reform, with the exile and the deep cleavage which it made in Jewish thought, with the Second Isaiah, the prophet of comfort, with Ezekiel partly prophet, partly pastor of souls, partly legislator, and with that priestly code most of which is contained in the middle books of the Pentateuch. The later developments of Judaism down to the Christian era may form the subject of another volume. It is hoped that the chronological table prefixed to this book will give a bird's-eye view of the whole

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subject and will be of service for reference.

*Results of Criticism Assumed.*—No doubt this chronological table makes considerable assumptions, and to some these assumptions may appear unwarranted. We are, however, obliged to take certain chronological data for granted. The results reached by the criticism of the documents are the principles from which we start. The proof of these must be sought in books like Dr. Driver's "Introduction to the Old Testament" or Hastings' "Dictionary of the Bible." An effort has been made throughout to observe the limits set by sober and moderate scholarship. Much is certain. On many questions of capital moment—such, *e.g.*, as the dates at which the documents composing the Pentateuch were written down, the date and authorship of most of the prophetic books—there is practical unanimity among men whose knowledge entitles them to judge. This agreement has been slowly attained: it has been severely tested by discussion, nor is there the slightest ground for thinking

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that it will ever be seriously disturbed. On the other hand, it must be frankly admitted that there are other matters which are, and perhaps always will be, shrouded in uncertainty. No one can say with just confidence when many of the Psalms were written: there is still much debate on the amount of matter in our book of Jeremiah which comes from the prophet or from Barueh his secretary, as distinct from additions made long after their time; different scholars hold different views on the extent to which the genuine productions of other prophets have been interpolated by the scribes. Sometimes also the text of the Hebrew Bible, even when we have sought all the help which the Septuagint can give, remains uncertain or even hopelessly corrupt. We may, however, obviate the consequent difficulty by distinguishing results morally certain from theories which do not rise above a certain degree of probability, and are but conjectures more or less ingenious. Fortunately it is when we enter the region of individual morality that the date and

## Introductory

surroundings of the various authors become doubtful or insoluble problems. We say "fortunately," for whereas writers like Amos, Hosea, and Jeremiah constantly refer to contemporary events, and must therefore be most imperfectly understood till we know when they wrote and what audience they found, it is otherwise with such books as Psalms, Proverbs, or Job. They deal with the great truths of ethics and religion as they present themselves to the individual. True, their authors are the children of their time, and we must gather from their own words, as best we can, the kind of time in which they lived and the ideas which prevailed among their friends and foes. When we have done so much, we have done what is essential: other questions are interesting and even important, but we can afford, if need be, to pass them by. When a prophet denounces alliance with Egypt or Assyria, or depicts the intestine strife which rent Israel asunder, or hails Cyrus as the servant of Jehovah, we cannot understand him till we can fix his date and ascertain the

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political history of his time. So, too, when we encounter codes of national law which to some extent contradict each other, we are forced to ask how far they were reduced to practice, which code was promulgated first, which superseded the other. The case is altered when we are studying a writer who is perplexed by the apparent injustice of the world or expresses the thirst of man's soul for communion with the living God. Thoughts like these are in a sense independent of time. Any great literature will illustrate the distinction in question. The public orations of Demosthenes and the tragedies of Sophocles have, both of them, their historical setting. But who would dream that the precise knowledge of the date and of the contemporary history is of equal value in the case of each?

## CHAPTER II

### PRIMITIVE FORMS OF SEMITIC RELIGION

*Semitic Nations in Relation to Each Other.*-- Hebrew is a form of Semitic speech, and the Hebrews belonged to the larger family of Semitic nations. True, the term "Semitic" is incorrect: it has arisen from the fact that Gen. x. traces the origin of the Hebrews, of the Aramaeans or Syrians, and of certain Arab tribes to Shem, Noah's eldest son. In Gen. x., however, the principle of arrangement is geographical rather than ethnological, and, were we to follow it consistently, we should have to exclude from the Semitic family the Canaanites, though their speech was almost identical with Hebrew, and to include Elam and Lud, whose language, in all probability, was of quite different sort. We must remember also that similarity or even identity of language does

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not of itself prove kinship in blood. English people speak one tongue: yet who can say how much Celtic or pre-Celtic blood flows in their veins? Still, it would be inconvenient to banish a title which has been accepted for a century or more, especially as no better name has been suggested. By Semitic languages, then, we mean the Arabic and Ethiopic of the south, Hebrew, Phœnician, Moabite (which we may call Middle Semitic), Aramaic, and Assyrian on the north and north-east. The points of similarity between these languages is very striking: they all employ forms and idioms strange and startling to those who have had no previous acquaintance with non-Aryan speech. In vocabulary also they are close to each other, though here, of course, the amount of similarity varies much. Indeed it would be misleading to compare the Semitic with the Indo-European family of languages: rather the similarity which binds them together resembles that which exists between the different varieties of the Teutonic or of the

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Slavic dialects. The primitive form of Semitic speech has perished, leaving no vestige behind. On the whole, though only on the whole, it is best represented by Arabic, for the nomad Arabs dwelt apart and their language was, on this account, less exposed to contamination. For the same reason the fragments of ancient Arabic religion are of special value for the history of religion in Israel. Such fragments have been preserved in poems from the time of "ignorance"—*i.e.* prior to the adoption of Islam, in the prohibitions of the Koran, in usages which linger among the Bedouin even now. Often they throw strong light on notices of ancient cults in the Old Testament, and when Arabic and Hebrew usage coincide, we are justified, unless it can be shown that one race has borrowed from the other, in accepting this agreement, as a survival from the time when the distinctions in Semitic speech and nationality had not yet arisen. Here, however, it is to be observed that the facts in question have little or nothing to do with theories on the cradle-land of the Semites. That is a vexed and apparently

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insoluble question. It would be idle to argue that Iceland was the original home of the Teutons because the oldest forms of Teutonic speech have been preserved there.

*The Word “Elohim.”*—The usual Hebrew name for God is “Elohim,” a word which combines a plural form with singular meaning. The corresponding singular “El” also occurs, but unless qualified by a defining adjective or genitive, is rare in prose. The root “El” is common to all varieties of Semitic speech, and the familiar “Allah” of Arabic is simply “*Ilāh*,” “God,” with the article “al” prefixed and assimilated in accordance with the common rule. It is natural to ask next what is the primary sense of this venerable word. This, however, is still a subject of dispute, and as yet no certain answer can be given. “Power” is, on the whole, the likeliest explanation, and in the plural form there may have been at first a reference to a number of supernatural powers which manifested themselves at one place or on one occasion. If this be so, the word

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would convey, simultaneously, the notion of multiplicity and unity. But whatever the original force of the word may have been, we can, in any case, note several points of interest in the history of its use. It must have been employed first when the notion of deity was exceedingly vague, and the current worship was paid to spirits rather than to gods properly so called. A god has a history and a character of his own. Apollo, for example, was the son of Zeus and Leto : he is the lord of light and life and healing : he slew the dragon python : he was the lover of the nymph Daphne, and had intrigues with maidens of mortal birth. The Semites, when they were left to themselves—*i.e.* when they did not, like the Assyrians and Phœnicians, assimilate elements of alien religion—cannot be said to have developed a mythology except in a very rudimentary fashion. The Arabs, to be sure, had come to believe in many gods and goddesses which, unlike mere spirits, had their home in the sky. But we are never told that the goddesses conceive and bear children. If, when the Muslims forced them

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to consider the relation of the goddesses to Allah, the heathen Arabs replied that these were his daughters, they simply meant that the goddesses shared Allah's nature and were subordinate to him. Now, much the same language—except that inferior gods rather than goddesses are in question—occurs in an ancient section of Genesis (vi. 1-4), which supplies the nearest approach to mythology within the compass of the Old Testament. There we read that "sons of Elohim" were captivated by the beauty of women and became by them fathers of giants. It is noteworthy that these superhuman beings are called "sons of Elohim" and not sons of Jehovah, for the story belongs to a remote period, while the name of Jehovah was unknown. We must remember also that in Hebrew and Arabic the word "son" is much more freely used than with us. In Hebrew "a son of death" denotes a man under a capital sentence; "a son of fifty years" is the habitual phrase in ordinary prose for a man fifty years old; "a son of the merchants" in Arabic means no more than a member of a

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mercantile guild.<sup>1</sup> So, here, the sons of Elohim are those who possess the nature of spirits and not of men. With this passage we may compare another, viz. 1 Sam. xxviii. 13. Saul, we are told, just before his last fatal battle, consulted a witch at Endor. She, at his request, evoked from Sheol, the abode of departed spirits, the ghost of Samuel, Saul's early friend and counsellor. As the ghost ascends, the woman cries out, "I see Elohim rising from the earth." Samuel is no longer a human being: he belongs to the sphere of the divine.

### A. OBJECTS OF WORSHIP

(1) *Worship of the Dead*.—We understand this use of Elohim for ghost better when we consider what deep roots the worship of the dead, and especially of ancestors, struck in Semitic soil. A "masseba," or sacred pillar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The idiom is not unknown in Greek though it is far less common. Plato, for instance, uses (Legg. 769 B.) "the sons of painters" as a periphrasis for "painters."

<sup>2</sup> "Usually a [Greek] tomb was surmounted by a *στήλη* or *κίον*" [*i.e.* a pillar]. "On the vases the offerings are represented as set down upon the square base of the pillar, as on an altar." —Tucker's Introduction to the *Chœphoroi*, p. xxxiii.

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—corresponding to that which stood by Jehovah's altar—stood (Gen. xxxv. 20) by the grave of Rachel, from whom the house of Joseph claimed descent. The higher religion of the prophets was never able to eradicate ancient superstition of this kind. Hence the law twice over (Deut. xviii. 11; Lev. xix. 31) forbids consultation of departed spirits, and the prohibition was by no means unnecessary. The custom prevailed in the last days of the Judæan monarchy (2 Kings xxi. 6) and long after the return from Babylon (Isa. lxv. 4). It subsists among the Bedouin at this day, though they profess the religion of Mohammed. Both Hebrews and Arabs buried instead of burning their dead. The Arabs used to pour wine and water on the grave, and allusions to the custom of feeding the dead are to be found in Hosea ix. 4 and Deut. xxvi. 14. The removal of the hair from the head (Isa. xxii. 12) or face (Isa. xv. 2) in case of mourning may be a relic of the hair offering once widely diffused. So, too, the practice of covering the head (2 Sam. xv. 30; Jer. xiv. 3),

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as a token of sorrow, may have arisen from fear of seeing the spirit which hovered for a time over the corpse: Elijah is said to have covered his head in the near presence of Jehovah.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the dust strewed on the head may have been taken at first from the grave, so that the mourner entered thereby into communion with the dead man's spirit, and this interpretation of the rite is confirmed by the usage of the ancient Arabs, who actually drank dust from the grave dissolved in water.<sup>2</sup> The sackcloth which was worn by prophets (Isa. xx.) as well as mourners may have been a sacred vestment, and the formal rending of the ordinary garment may have been simply the preparation for putting on the sackcloth. The modern Jew goes barefoot in mourning, as Moses did when he drew near to the burning bush. Even the wailing acquires a new import, when we learn that the Arabs cried to the spirit of the dead, "Be not far off." Assuming that the explana-

<sup>1</sup> This, however, is at best a plausible guess. The Romans covered the head in sacrificing, apparently to keep any ill-omened object out of sight. See *Verg. AEn.* iii. 405, *seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Robertson Smith, "Rel. Sem.," p. 304, n. 3.

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tions given are satisfactory on the whole, we can see why prophets and legislators condemned the current ritual of the dead. It was a primeval form of worship opposed to that of Jehovah, the one and only legitimate object of Israel's public worship. "Shall not a people inquire of its God? Shall it inquire of the dead on behalf of the living?" (Isa. viii. 19). The higher religion would admit of no fellowship with the lower: even the necessary care for the dead, even the least contact with a corpse made a man unclean. But the original idea of uncleanness goes back beyond the era of the prophets. Originally, a man who had touched a corpse became unclean, because he was charged with supernatural influence of a perilous kind.<sup>1</sup> This worship of the dead serves to explain much of the constitution and fundamental axioms of ancient society. The limitation of inheritance to males was natural, since it was the office of the sons, and especially of the

<sup>1</sup> Among the Arabs, however, contact with a corpse did not defile. The Hebrews also, at one time, had no scruples on this point. See, *e.g.*, Ezek. xlivi. 7, *seq.*

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eldest son, to make oblation for the dead. A woman's passionate desire to be the mother of sons sprang from the same source. Of course this worship of the dead was familiar far beyond the limits of Semitic race and speech. We find the feeding of the dead elaborately described in the eleventh book of the *Odyssey*, and in the *Choephoroi* of *Æschylus* and the *Antigone* of *Sophocles* the underlying notion of service due to the dead is substantially the same, though the form of libation is greatly refined. At Rome the priestly colleges had strict rules against defilement by contact with a corpse, rules closely analogous to those which obtained among the Hebrews.<sup>1</sup>

(2) *Sacred Stones.* — It must not, however, be supposed that the spirits worshipped among Semites were always spirits of the dead. There were spirits which had never borne the human form. Some of these took up their abode in stones. The black stone at Mecca, afterwards

<sup>1</sup> See Tacit. Ann. i. 63, with Furneaux's note, which contains much curious information on the subject.

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built into the Caaba, was the primary and central object of veneration, and like importance was attached to a sacred stone in the time-honoured sanctuary at Bethel. No doubt, the feature of early worship is obscured by the editorial process to which the narrative in Genesis (xxviii. 11-22) has been subjected. Still, the original sense of the story, which is a *ἱερὸς λόγος*, or temple-myth, comes out clearly in the concluding verse: "This stone which I have set up as a *masseba* (or sacred pillar) shall be a house (or dwelling-place) of a god." In homage to the indwelling deity Jacob is said to have anointed the stone: unction being in the East an act of courtesy to a guest, was fitly offered to the spirit in the stone which the worshipper desired to conciliate. The same practice is attested in the case of the Assyrians by an inscription of Esarhaddon: "*λιθοι λιπαροί*," "lapides uncti," are technical terms for anointed stones in Greek and Latin, and for meteoric stones the Greeks used the very word "Bethel" (*βαιτυλος*, or *βαιτυλιον*), which they must have borrowed from the Phoeni-

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cians. It has been suggested, though this is a hazardous conjecture, that the title, "rock of Israel," given to Jehovah in an early poem (Gen. xlix. 24), may have originated in stone-worship, or rather in the worship of spirits which lived in stones, though, of course, to the Biblical writer who employed it the title had become no more than a figure of speech. In any case, many passages in the Old Testament (*e.g.* Jer. ii. 27, besides place-names like Ebenezer) show that this form of worship was widely spread. We should add that the word "masseba" is generally used not for a stone in its rough state, but for a stone erected by man, who then invites the spirit to hallow it by its presence. Moreover, several "masseboth" might be erected together (Exod. xxiv. 4. Comp. Joshua iv. 20). So far, even in the earliest epoch of which we have any knowledge, the use of the sacred stone has advanced beyond fetichism. In Hosea's day the "masseba" still formed an indispensable piece of sacred furniture. He looks forward to a period of exile in which "sacrifice and 'masseba'" shall cease to be, as if the end

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of the one were the end of the other. After a time the “masseba” came in the minds of some to be regarded as no more than a memorial stone, like gravestones or monuments among ourselves. Finally the Deuteronomist (Deut. xii. 3, &c.), recognising dangerous associations with superstition, prohibited the “masseba” absolutely. From like motives the Koran (v. 93) prohibited the “ansab,” a plural form identical with the Hebrew “masseba” not only in meaning but in etymology.

(3) *Sacred Trees*.—For certain species of trees the Hebrew language employs a remarkable word which appears in forms slightly varied as “elah,” “elon,” “allon.” Evidently the word resembles the root “el,” *i.e.* God, and most likely the words “elah,” &c., were names of evergreen trees in which men saw manifestations of divine life. Such objects would be especially striking in the wilderness, where vegetation is stunted and meagre. They might also be regarded as the chosen dwelling-places of superhuman beings. We have evidence for this later and, by comparison, higher view in the fact that several

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trees might grow together, all of them associated with the same divine being. It is said, for instance, in the legends of Mohammed, that Chalid, at the prophet's bidding, cut down three trees sacred to Uzza, from the last of which she leapt in the guise of a woman. It is plain from the reiterated denunciations of the Hebrew prophets that tree-worship, or the worship of spirits living in trees, was an inveterate habit of the Israelites. They loved to gather for sacred rites "under every luxuriant tree." One such grew in the sanctuary of Jehovah at Shechem (*Joshua xxiv. 26*), like the palm-tree which flourished (*Od. vi. 163*) by Apollo's birthplace and shrine at Delos. Apparently it is the same tree which is called the "oak of the soothsayer" (*Gen. xii. 6*), or "of the diviners" (*Judges ix. 37*), and at all events the name given clearly indicates the sacred character attributed to trees. Even David (*2 Sam. v. 22, seq.*) took the rustling sound in the Beca trees as an omen, and we are reminded of that most ancient oracle in Greece where men sought to know the mind of Zeus "from the leafy oak tall of

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stature." As the "masseba" was a substitute for the sacred stone, so was the "asherah"—a pole or mast planted near an altar—a substitute for the sacred tree. The "asherah" stood at Canaanite shrines (Exod. xxxiv. 13; Judges vi. 25), in the sanctuary of Samaria (2 Kings xiii. 6) and of Bethel (2 Kings xxiii. 15), as well as in the temple at Jerusalem (2 Kings xxiii. 6). The worship of trees passed through much the same phases as the worship of stones. The trees became objects of interest connected with the lives of the Patriarchs, and finally the use of the "asherah" was forbidden altogether.<sup>1</sup>

(4) *Sacred Wells.*—Sacred wells or springs are less frequently mentioned in the Bible, and there is no polemic against them in the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Moore, in *Encycl. Bibl.*, art. "Ashera," denies that the "Asherah" was a substitute for the sacred tree, chiefly on the ground that in 2 Kings xvii. 10 the "asherahs" are said to have been put "under every green tree," and cannot, therefore, have been substitutes for trees. But the passage is admittedly late, and the familiar phrase, "under every green tree," seems to be used with no definite meaning. Sometimes "Asherah" is employed as the name of a goddess. This goddess, however, is no mere fiction of a later age, for we now know from the Tel-el-Amarna tablets that there was a Canaanite or Aramaean goddess called Ašratu.

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prophets. There are, however, clear marks of the sanctity once associated with living water. In an old fragment of Hebrew poetry (Num. xxi. 17, 18) the spring is invoked as if it could hear and feel. “Rise up, O well; sing ye to it:” so the song begins, and we are not justified in drawing the modern distinction between poetic imagery and plain matter of fact. Moreover, in the time of Amos (Amos v. 5, viii. 14) Beersheba was a favourite place of pilgrimage even for subjects of the northern kingdom. Evidently it was a sacred well, though the precise meaning of the name is doubtful, “the well of the seven” [spirits, or “numina”], or “the well of the oath,” being possible interpretations. We have other instances of sacred springs in En-mishpat, “the fountain of the oracle,” which is localised in Kadish, “the holy place.” We have another instance in Beer-la-hai-roi, “the well of the living one that seeth me,” which was also near Kadesh. At En-rogel by “the serpent stone”—the serpent being in Arabia and Syria a demonic or sacred creature—Adonijah held a sacrificial feast, and at the

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spring of Gihon his rival Solomon was crowned. The northern sanctuary of Dan also may have had some connection with the sources of the Jordan.

(5) *Sacred Animals.*—We reserve for the following chapter all question on the use of images, for it is doubtful if they were known in the early stage of Semitic religion. The Arabic word for idol or image is said to be of foreign origin, and it is certain that in other religions—*e.g.* in those of Persia, Greece, and Rome—images are a secondary, not a primary, phenomenon. Nor, again, can it be shown that clan-totemism—*i.e.* the worship of sacred objects, chiefly animals or plants, from which the worshipper claimed descent—was ever known to the Semites.<sup>1</sup> We find, however, traces of the belief that animals may possess superhuman powers. According to Arab belief, brutes can see and hear spirits when men cannot; and this general principle is exemplified in the Hebrew story of Balaam's

<sup>1</sup> The sporadic use of names like “Sons of Hamor,” *i.e.* ass, are insufficient proof of Totemism in the strict sense. For the argument on the other side see R. Smith, “Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia,” p. 186, *seq.*

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ass (Num. xxii.). There, however, the ass not only sees what her master cannot see, but also speaks with human voice; and for this latter trait we have an analogy in the horse of Achilles (Il. xix. 404), which predicts the hero's fate; or, again, in the speaking serpent of Genesis iii. A more difficult question arises on the origin of the distinction between clean and unclean animals (Deut. xiv. ; Lev. xi.). It is true that the lists which we have are comparatively modern. But the distinction between clean and unclean animals is much older than its systematisation in Deuteronomy and the Priestly code, and the author to whom we owe the Jahvist story of the Flood plainly regarded it as primeval. We have already rejected the theory that the animals were totems, so that families abstained from eating them because they themselves were of the same blood, the single prohibitions coalescing into a table of prohibited food, as the families themselves coalesced into tribes and the tribes into a nation. On the whole, the following explanation seems to be the best, and it is now

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generally accepted. Paradoxical as it may sound, it is nevertheless certain that the notions of clean and unclean merge in each other and are really the same thing from opposite points of view. Thus it follows, from a comparison of Lev. xi. 33 with vi. 28, that a vessel which contained the flesh of sacrifice offered to Jehovah, and another into which the body of a “creeping thing” had fallen, were both unclean. Similarly, in Talmudic language a canonical book “defiles the hands.” The common root of clean and unclean may be expressed by the Polynesian word “taboo,” *i.e.* interdicted. A person or thing is unclean, because he or it has fallen under spirit or demon influence and should not therefore be lightly handled. We may therefore believe that unclean animals were originally sacred. Swine were esteemed sacred in the Hauran, while the Greeks looked upon them as “mystic” animals (Aristoph. Acharn., 764), and also used their blood to purify the guilt of homicide.<sup>1</sup> We have a

<sup>1</sup> See Stein’s note on Herod. i. 35, especially the quotation from Apollonius Rhodius; also Æsch. Eumen. 244

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stronger argument for the original sanctity of unclean animals in the fact that among the Jews themselves their flesh was sometimes eaten sacramentally. Mysterious assemblies were held by graves (Isa. lxv. 5, lxvi. 3, 17), and there men ate flesh of mice and swine and participated in a kind of hell-broth. By such rites a man received a religious consecration, and could say to his neighbour: "Come not near me, for I am holier than thou." Another view prevailed among the faithful servants of Jehovah. To them such animals were unclean because they had been associated with heathen superstition. Something of the same kind happened among the nations of Northern Europe. They had been used to offer the horse in sacrifice to Odin, and hence in English synods of 787 and 788 (Haddan and Stubbs, iii. p. 459), the eating of horseflesh was forbidden on the express ground that it was a relic of paganism.

(6) *Spirits of Disease, Birth, House, Desert, &c.*—Animism is a vague form of belief, and the objects of its cult are innumerable. The agency of spirits was recognised in various

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cases of disease, above all in leprosy. They were at work also in the mystery of birth.<sup>1</sup> A woman who had borne a child was unclean or "taboo," so that contact with her was forbidden till the supernatural influence was removed by purification.<sup>2</sup> From like motives the Greeks prohibited, so far as might be, birth or death in Delos, the sacred island of Apollo. Persons in danger of death, and women near their time, were removed (Thucyd. iii. 104) to the adjacent island of Rheneia. Moreover, spirits guarded the threshold of temple and house. To avoid their encounter the priests of Dagon leapt over the temple threshold (1 Sam. v. 5): Zephaniah speaks of the same custom as existing among the Hebrews of his day, and even now in Syria it is unlucky to tread on a threshold. The door-posts were also under the protection of penates, or spirits of the

<sup>1</sup> See an article on Australian totems in the *Fortnightly*, for August 1905, by Dr. Frazer. Some tribes in Central Australia do not know that birth proceeds from the commerce of the sexes, and believe that quickening in pregnancy is due to a spirit which enters the woman.

<sup>2</sup> For a like custom in Greece see Eurip. Elect., 654.

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household, and so when his master accepted the perpetual service of a Hebrew bondsman, he took him to the door-post and pierced his ear with an awl, by that act bringing him to Elohim and introducing him to the family sacra. In contrast to the spirits of the dwelling stood the spirits who haunted the waste places and ruins (Isa. xiii. 21, xxxiv. 14), where it was dangerous to disturb them. A particular kind of such demons was known as *s'irim*, a word which usually means “he-goats.” It may have been given because the spirits in question assumed the form of goats like the Greek satyrs, and this suits the description given of them as dancing and calling to each other. The name of one such demon—viz. Azazel—has been preserved in the ritual for the day of atonement (Lev. xvi.).

### **B. COMMUNION WITH GODS OR SPIRITS**

(1) *By Oblation of Gifts, by Propitiatory Offering, by Blood sprinkled on Worshippers and Object of Worship, by Human Sacrifice.*—It is natural to regard sacrifice as an offering

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to the gods. This is the view assumed in Hesiod's familiar line: "Gifts persuade the gods, gifts persuade august kings." Nor are we entitled to deny that this conception of sacrifice is primitive. On the contrary, when the later ritual speaks of sacrifice as "the bread" or "food of Elohim" (Lev. iii. 11, &c.), we may be sure that the phrase carries us a long way back, to a time when men entertained very naïve ideas of the divine. Another expression is no less illuminative. The deity is said, in our English version of the Bible, "to smell the sweet savour" of sacrifice (Gen. viii. 21, &c.), but the rendering is inadequate; the literal sense is rather that of a "soothing" or "tranquillising" odour. Much in the same way, though with an added touch of grosser materialism, Homer's gods live on the smoke of the sacrifice. An ancient word, used in the earlier ages for every sort of sacrifice—viz. *minhah*, or "gift"—points in the same direction: so does Jacob's offering of oil to the deity in the sacred stone. Libations, too, in which the idea of gift or oblation seems to be prominent, are common

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to many forms of religion, and appear to have been especially prominent among the Semites, seeing that the Hebrew word for drink-offering has, in Arabic, the general sense of worship, the more original and limited meaning having become almost obsolete. It was also an ancient practice to pour out water before the deity (1 Sam. vii. 6 ; 2 Sam. xxiii. 16), and it is interesting to note that this custom, having apparently died out elsewhere, was retained, according to Jewish tradition, in the feast of Tabernacles. We may be sure also that fear was a large element in Hebrew, as in all ancient religion. The "terror of Isaac" was a title of the deity who dwelt at Mizpah, or perhaps at Beersheba. The expression is a remarkable one, and recalls "the terror of the night," possibly a demon, mentioned in Ps. xci. 5. Propitiation, the endeavour to appease a god, or, as the vivid Hebrew phrase has it, to "smooth his face," must have been an object of Hebrew sacrifice from the first. David utters a view transmitted from ages far anterior to his own, anterior, also, to the worship of Jehovah, when

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he says to Saul (1 Sam. xxvi. 19), “ If Jehovah hath stirred up thee against me, let Him smell an offering.” But the desire to offer the god a gift, or to appease his wrath, is far from being the only root from which religious service grew, and there is reason to think that the burning of the gift was of later institution, since the heathen Arabs (except in the case of human sacrifice) were not acquainted with it. One great purpose of sacrifice was not so much to make an oblation as to secure the communion of the worshipper with his god and of the worshippers with each other. Sacrifice was a bond, knitting God to man, men to men. Herodotus (iii. 108) tells us how the Arabs of his age made covenants. Blood was drawn from the thumbs of the men who entered into agreement, it was smeared on a rag torn from their garments and then on seven stones, the number seven being sacred, so much so that the common word in Hebrew for taking an oath seems to be connected with it. Thus the “ men of the Covenant ” became of one blood, or if they were so already, the old tie was maintained

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and quickened. Herodotus (i. 74) and Tacitus (Ann. xii. 47) mention a custom prevalent in Western Asia, according to which men made a covenant by “licking up” each other’s blood. The same feeling, the same literal materialism which in a more refined age evaporated into metaphor, prompted Hebrew mourners to cut their own flesh, and enables us to understand the passion with which the priests of the Syrian Baal hacked themselves (1 Kings xviii. 28) while they called on their god. So Moses sprinkled the blood of the covenant (Exod. xxiv. 6–8) both on the altar and the people. The Hebrew idiom speaks of “cutting” instead of making a covenant, in allusion to the cutting up and distribution of the victim, and the Greek phrase, *τέμνειν ὁρκία*, may be explained in like manner. The Hebrew tongue had also a technical term (Jer. xli. 5; Deut. xiv. 1) for the act by which the worshipper wounded himself in the service of his god, and Wellhausen traces the Hebrew word for prayer (though here we are in the region of conjecture) to a root of

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similar meaning. Now the most efficacious means of clinching the blood covenant between men and the unseen powers would consist in offering the life-blood of a clansman, the clan rather than the individual forming the unit in ancient society. And, in fact, human sacrifice was not unknown to the Arabs, and was practised especially in time of dire distress by the Hebrews. Jephthah is said to have slain his daughter as a sacrifice, and probably the usage east of the Jordan was much older than the legend which assigns a reason for the cruel rite. Mesha, King of Moab (2 Kings iii. 27), slew his eldest son in the extremity of siege and so turned the wrath of his god Chemosh against Israel, and notoriously such sacrifices were common among the Phœnician Semites. Feeling, as it grew more humane, may have led to the substitution of a captive and finally of an animal for a clansman. In the sublime and pathetic story of Abraham's sacrifice a ram takes the place of Isaac, as in one form of the myth Artemis accepted a hind instead of Iphigenia. We may, however, confidently assert that

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human sacrifice was never common among the early Hebrews. The opposite theory, based on a misinterpretation of Exod. xxii. 29, "The first-born of thy sons shalt thou give to Me," is quite untenable. It is refuted by the pride and joy which the Israelites, as far back as our records go (Gen. xlix. 3), felt in their eldest sons. The prevalence of human sacrifice in the decline of the Hebrew monarchy is another question which does not concern us here.

(2) *By Circumcision.* — Closely connected with the covenant of blood is the rite of circumcision. It was not indeed universal among Semites, for the Assyrians did not use it, but still it was common to several Semitic races, as appears from Jer. ix. 25, 26 (see R.V.), which is the classical passage on the subject. The Koran presupposes it as an established custom. It was also in vogue among some of the non-Semitic races, notably the Egyptians. The Hebrew ceremony, however, deviated from the primitive form in the matter of age, and the Bedouins, who circumcise boys, not infants, are nearer

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to the original idea, for the Arabic verb meaning to circumcise signifies in Hebrew to contract affinity by marriage. We are warranted, then, in the belief that circumcision was at first synchronous with puberty, that it introduced a youth to the sacra of the tribe and made him capable of marriage. It was in the Philistine wars that the Hebrews first came into contact with uncircumcised men, and phrases such as "this uncircumcised Philistine" remain to show that they regarded them on this account with peculiar aversion.

(3) *By other Offerings, such as Milk, Hair, &c., by Kissing the Sacred Stones, by Wearing Amulets.*—The effusion of blood was not the only means by which the ancient Semites entered into communion with the spirits and appeased or gratified them. Milk was used by the Arabs<sup>1</sup> as a substitute for blood, and the prohibition three times repeated (Exod. xxiii. 19, xxxiv. 26; Deut. xiv. 21) of

<sup>1</sup> It was also offered among Aryan nations. See, e.g., *AEn.* iii. 66, with Connington's note. It was regularly offered among the Greeks to the dead.

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seething a kid in its mother's milk must refer to some ceremony of this kind among the Hebrews, though its precise nature cannot now be ascertained. We have already seen that the hair of the head, the seat of life and strength (comp. the story of Samson), was offered to the dead, so much so that baldness became a synonym for mourning (Amos viii. 10; Isa. xxii. 12), though in Deut. xiv. 1 the custom is forbidden as heathenish. We have no detailed information on the Hebrew mode of presenting the shorn locks. The Arabs used to put the hair on the tomb; the Greeks did so likewise (Æsch. Chœph. 167, &c.), though Achilles (Il. xxiii. 141, *seq.*) casts upon the corpse itself locks once dedicated to the river-god Spercheius. We cannot say for certain that the Hebrews kissed stones, as the Arabs kissed the black stone at Mecca. We do know, however, that they kissed images (Hos. xiii. 2), and we may without rashness carry back the custom to an age when the Hebrews had not yet learned to worship idols. It may also be by accident

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that the Hebrew Bible is silent about the custom, still prevalent in the East, of hanging fragments of clothes on sacred trees.<sup>1</sup> Amulets, too, played a notable part in Semitic worship. For this reason the Hebrews decked themselves with ornaments (Exod. xi. 2, xii. 35) when they set out for Sinai. Indeed, the Syriac word for ear-ring means, literally, “holy thing,” and a South Arabic word for pearl is said to have a similar derivation.

### C. FEASTS

Was the worship of the primitive Semites linked to stated feasts? Certainly most of the Hebrew feasts, as their agricultural character proves, were not kept before the settlement in Canaan. We are, however, justified by Hebrew tradition (Exod. x. 24, *seq.*) in referring the Passover to old nomad days. Originally it was quite distinct from the feast of unleavened bread, with which the harvest began, and the offering made at

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Lucan, i. 140, *seq.*

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Passover, viz. that of the firstlings in the flock, though it does not necessarily imply the nomad state, is quite suited to it. There is, however, considerable difference of opinion about the first purpose of the celebration, and the root of the word *Pesah*, or Passover, is far too doubtful to be used in argument on either side. Some scholars have held that it was a spring festival, and this seems quite satisfactory if we fix our attention on the oblation of firstlings, since spring is usually the time at which young cattle are born. The Arabs held a spring feast called *Ragab*. But we have also to consider a striking feature in the ritual of the first, or Egyptian, Passover, as narrated in Exodus (xii. 21-27). The head of each family had to take the blood of a sheep or goat and sprinkle it on the lintel and door-posts as a protection against the destroying spirit. The ceremony has an antique air, whatever date we may assign to the passage which describes it. Possibly, then, the Passover was designed as a safeguard in time of plague, or else—and this is probably the preferable

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view—two distinct observances, both ancient, have been united in tradition and even, it may be, in continuous usage. The feast of the new moon (Hos. ii. 11; Amos viii. 5; Isa. i. 13) also belongs to nomad life. At its recurrence family sacrifices were offered (1 Sam. xx. 5, *seq.*), and, the months being lunar, it was natural to date all feasts from the evening, a mode of reckoning to which the Jews still adhere and which the Christian Church has inherited from them.

### D. SACRED PERSONS

Of sacred persons little need be said here. The history of Israel was far advanced before priests with exclusive right of sacrifice held office. The Arabic form “kāhīn,” corresponding to the common Hebrew word for priest, “kōhēn,” signifies one who, as the organ of a jinn or spirit, gave oracles, chiefly, perhaps, at a sanctuary. Little by little the Arab “kāhin” lost his connection with the sanctuary and sank into a mere sorcerer, while the Hebrew “kōhēn” became a priest in

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the proper sense. We cannot tell how the priest interpreted the will of the spirit, though a common Hebrew word for sorcerer points to the use of the sacred lot, a method which was employed in the shrine at Mecca before the image of the god Hubal. But no rule bound the god to speak through a priest or sorcerer. Jacob received a revelation in dream by incubation—*i.e.* by sleeping in the holy place—and Solomon (1 Kings iii. 4, *seq.*) had a like experience at the Bamah, or high place, of Gibeon. Omens also might guide a man on his way. The Arabs thought a man was likely to meet his destiny in searching for lost cattle, and thus, according to the Hebrew story, Saul came to be anointed King of Israel.

### E. SUMMARY

#### *The Blood Revenge; the Strength of the Tribal Unity*

The reader may complain that we have been dealing with savage superstitions which do not deserve the name of religion. The

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answer is, that even in the lowest stage of worship man is seeking after union with superhuman powers and also with his fellow-men. He has transcended the sphere of magic which endeavours to constrain the higher powers without coming to be of one mind with them. Early religion bound the members of the clan each to each, and an offence against the community was sure to be visited on the offender by the protecting spirits. Moreover, the blood of sacrifice was a most real bond between those who were not, who were not even thought to be, of a common stock. In this way not only persons adopted into the clan, but even slaves initiated into the household sacra, were put under the shadow of religion. Again, the law of blood revenge, which is closely connected with the religious ideas of which we have been speaking, served as the police of the desert. It never died out in Israel, though it was seriously modified by later legislation. In the Arabian desert it prevails now. It bound the whole family or clan to avenge a tribesman, and a man who killed another had to reckon

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with the collective force of the injured man's tribe or clan. These early beliefs were rude and gross: there was at first no distinction between voluntary and involuntary homicide: there are savages in Columbia (Frazer's "Totemism," p. 57, *seq.*) who exact penalty from a man who has shed his own blood by accident, on the ground that his blood is not really his own, but that of the tribe. Still these early beliefs with their fanciful materialism contain the seeds of subsequent advance, moral and religious.

Before we quit this subject, it is well to note the peculiar strength of the tribal tie among the Semites. The very form of their speech indicates this. As a rule the Greeks and Romans used plural adjectives for the names of tribes and peoples. They spoke of Dorians, *Æolians*, Ionians, of Ramnes, Tities, Luceres. As a rule the Semites employed the singular noun as the collective name; they said Israel, Edom, Moab, Naphtali, Zebulon, &c., or else sons of Israel, daughters of Moab, not Edomite, Israelite, or the like. To them the tribe was one with the concrete

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unity of a living person. Thus Mesha, King of Moab, declares on his monumental stone that his god Chemosh told him to "take Nebo against Israel," and the diplomatic message (Num. xx. 14, *seq.*) of the Hebrews to the Edomites begins with the words, "Thus saith thy brother Israel, thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us. . . . Let us pass through thy land." To this the Edomites answer, "Thou shalt not pass through me, lest I come out with the sword against thee." In modern language such personification would be ludicrous except in poetry.

## CHAPTER III

### THE WORSHIP OF JEHOVAH

*The Revelation of Jehovah.*—So far, we have been occupied with beliefs and practices which Israel shared with other Semites, and to some extent with peoples and tribes all the world over. Up to this point we have seen few marks of progress, and certainly such progress as can be discovered calls for no extraordinary explanation. The religion of Israel was not in the first instance made: it arose and grew in prehistoric periods: it had no founder: no man reduced it to system. Suddenly a new and higher religion appeared upon the scene. Instead of a vague belief in spirits, the tribes which afterwards coalesced into the Hebrew nation adopted the sole worship of a God who revealed Himself as Jehovah, and they made allegiance to Him the bond of union

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among themselves. This momentous revolution, which has affected the whole subsequent history of religion, took place at a time when the civilisations of Egypt and Babylon were already old. But, unfortunately, all the documents which relate the history of the change were written centuries after the event, and are at issue with each other on important points. For example, one writer distinctly asserts (Exod. vi. 2, 3) that the Patriarchs did not know the name Jehovah, whereas another and earlier writer makes Eve use it, and informs us (Gen. iv. 26) that in the time of Enosh, Adam's grandson, men "began to call upon the name of Jehovah." This, though the palmary instance, is still only one out of many discordant views which lie side by side in that composite work which we call the Pentateuch. It is quite natural that persons on their first acquaintance with such contradictions should be tempted to surrender in despair all attempt to form a rational estimate of Moses and his work. Yet here, as elsewhere, patient investigation does not

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fail to earn its reward: we can gather fragments of truth from the mass of legendary matter, and we may venture to offer the following statement of facts as one which, as a whole, rests upon sufficient evidence and would be generally accepted by sober-minded scholars.

(1) *The Worship of Jehovah anterior to the Settlement in Canaan.*—The worship of Jehovah as Israel's only God preceded the settlement in Canaan and the political unity of the tribes. On the latter point we have proof positive in Deborah's song, a very ancient, perhaps the most ancient relic of Hebrew literature. The poem presupposes that the tribes are still independent. Judah stood quite apart: it is not even mentioned, though the song enumerates in honorific terms the tribes which fought against Sisera, and reviles with hatred and scorn those who held aloof. Barak and Deborah summoned and led the Israelite clans, but there is no hint of any common ruler, any judge in the later sense whose affair it was to levy troops and constrain

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obedience. Yet the tribes, though politically separate, were expected to be one in common zeal for Jehovah their God. It was Jehovah who made the people "offer themselves willingly," Jehovah who goes down to fight for His people against the Canaanites. The wrath of heaven falls on Israelites who fail in the supreme duty of fighting with Jehovah's army. "Curse ye Meroz, saith the angel of Jehovah, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of Jehovah, the help of Jehovah among the mighty." We may then confidently affirm that it was the worship of Jehovah which made the Hebrew tribes one in time of war, till slowly and long after Deborah's time they were moulded into a single commonwealth. We may borrow an illustration from the history of our own church and realm. It was not England which established the national church. Rather the unity of the church in Saxon Britain with its primatial see and national synods preceded the unity of the Saxon kingdoms and helped to make them one. It is no less evident that the

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knowledge of Jehovah was not learned in Canaan. Jehovah in the song comes from the mountains of the South to fight against Canaan, and it was just the enthusiasm of the scattered Israelites for Jehovah the god of battles which saved them from absorption by the Canaanites with their superior civilisation.

(2) *Jehovah revealed Himself to Israelites in Egypt: their Servitude and Deliverance.* —Jehovah, then, was the God of the Hebrews when they first came to Canaan: but can we go further back? The earliest authorities which we have tell us that we may. Jehovah, says Amos (iii. 1), “brought up” “all Israel out of Egypt,” and we need not multiply references when all the Biblical writers are at one. True, even the earliest writers who refer to the sojourn in Egypt wrote six or seven centuries at least after the event. The statement, however, is eminently credible. The oldest tradition (Gen. xlvi. 34) represents the Hebrew tribes as feeding their flocks, not in Egypt proper, but in Goshen on the Arabian frontier. This removes the objection,

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otherwise plausible, that neither Hebrew language nor institutions betray any trace of Egyptian influence. We need not press the prophet's words that "all" Israel was in Egypt; conceivably there is some exaggeration here, for one early form of the tradition may be interpreted as a confused recollection of the fact that the house of Joseph alone settled in Goshen. Be that as it may, Jehovah "called them up" from grievous oppression which can hardly fail to be historical since no nation would willingly invent the story of its servitude. A Pharaoh often identified with Ramses II.,<sup>1</sup> a great builder, did his utmost to turn the free men of the desert into serfs and set them to make

<sup>1</sup> This being so, the Pharaoh of the Exodus would be Merneptah, Ramses' successor. But a poetical inscription of his fifth year recently discovered describes Libya, Canaan, and Cheta (the Hittites) as subdued, "y-si-r'-l," as, "without fruit." The last word which has the determinative mark for men must almost certainly mean "Israelites," and the inscription seems to imply that they were already settled in Canaan. But the history of the name "Israel" is little known. It may have been borne by tribes which afterwards coalesced with the Hebrews of the Exodus. The Tel-el-Amarna inscriptions speak about 1400 of Habiri who were invading Canaan, but the identification of the Habiri with the Hebrews is quite uncertain.

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bricks. Their spirit was being crushed out of them, when God sent them a deliverer in the person of Moses. Moses rallied their fainting courage in the name of Jehovah, who was henceforth to be the sole object of their public worship, and when Egypt was paralysed by plague, he led them across the Gulf of Suez, which then stretched much farther north and inland than it does to-day. It is well worth while to observe what moderate proportions the marvel assumes when we work our way back to its primary form. Jehovah, says the early writer, generally known as the Jahvist (Exod. xiv. 21), "caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night and made the sea dry land." Next morning the sea returned to its former state and drowned the Egyptians. No doubt, the early narrator saw in this providential deliverance the hand of Israel's God. The distinction between special providence and miracle would have had no meaning for him, for as yet the conception of natural law and of miracle which is thought to suspend or modify this law had not risen above the mental horizon.

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But he had eyes to see that Jehovah in this supreme crisis directed the fortune of the people which He had brought near to Himself. Who that understands the value of prophetic religion and its inseparable connection with Christ who is the truth will venture to contradict him? In any case the event explains, as nothing else can, the religious confidence of Israel and the power of Moses. The history of the subsequent wandering in the desert is for the most part a blank. It is said to have lasted forty years, but the Pentateuch preserves almost absolute silence about the whole of this period, except the two first years and the last. Moreover, a great deal which we are told of the first and closing years cannot be accepted in its present form as historical. Nevertheless, on two points the tradition may justly claim assent. In the first place, Moses led the tribes to Sinai or Horeb, and in solemn sacrifice formally instituted the new religion. Next the stay at Kadesh bears the stamp of truth. This place, still called Kadish—*i.e.* “holy”—lies south of Palestine, midway

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between the south of the Dead Sea and the Philistine coast. Our information on the sojourn there (Num. xx. 16) comes from an early source. The place is rich in pasture, and is, indeed, the only spot within the limits of the wilderness which could support a number of people for any length of time. It contains arable land, and we may well believe that it was the bridge over which the Israelites passed from nomad to agricultural life. A fountain there was called En Mishpat, "fountain of judgment or decision," a probable reference to decisions given there in Jehovah's name.

*(3) Moses was the Prophet and Priest of the New Religion.*—The religion of Jehovah as the God of Israel began with Moses. He is, beyond all reasonable doubt, an historical character, and it is impossible to understand the rise of nation or worship apart from him. Had his name perished and his very existence been blotted out from the memory of his countrymen, we should have been obliged to postulate a personality such as his. The character of Hebrew revelation demands no less.

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The definite transition from some form of animism to the service of a personal God, who chose the tribes of Israel, making them one with each other because they were one in loyalty to Him, and revealing to them His character in the way by which He led them, cannot have been effected save by a great religious genius. We have a parallel case in the Persian religion, which is so different from nature worship, that we cannot, without quite undue scepticism, fail to acknowledge the influence exercised by the creative mind of Zoroaster, though our information about him is meagre in the extreme. *A fortiori* does this reasoning apply to Israel, which was dominated throughout the long course of its religious development by great teachers and reformers. Moses, in some way which no man can fathom, felt the divine call ; he became the priest of Israel, sprinkling the blood of the sacrifice (Exod. xxiv. 6) and giving the priestly oracles (Exod. xviii., xxxiii. 7-11). The old priesthoods of Dan (Judges xviii. 30) and of Shilo (1 Sam. ii. 27) traced their descent

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to him. Hosea (xii. 13) calls him a prophet, while in Deuteronomy (xviii. 18) he is the greatest of all the prophets; and though the use of the word may be an anachronism, the sense conveyed is altogether true and right. Because he was the leader in religion he also commanded the tribes in war (Num. x. 35, *scq.*), for war was a religious function, and the battle-cry was in Jehovah's name. A great deliverance had been wrought: Moses was the prophet who interpreted it and taught the people the hidden sense of their common experience, and led them on to further victory. Under these conditions the new religion arose. From the time of Moses the religion of Israel was unique. Jehovah, and He alone, was to be adored. He was no mere tribal god, but, on the contrary, a God who gathered the tribes into a national confederation. Other nations claimed the protection of their god by virtue of a natural bond: Jehovah became the God of Israel by His own free choice. Other gods arose in dim prehistoric times, none knew how: the recollection of the crisis

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which made Jehovah Israel's God was never lost. Lastly, He had revealed Himself from the first, under a moral aspect, as one who punished the oppressor and let the captive go free.

(4) *The Knowledge of Jehovah before Moses.*—We have said that the knowledge of Jehovah as the God of collective Israel dates from Moses. It does not, however, follow from this that Jehovah had been, up to that time, absolutely unknown. It is indeed impossible to believe that the tribes would have accepted a God whose name and being had been hitherto strange to them. According to the tradition in all its various forms Moses did not appeal to a new God, but to the God who had already manifested Himself to the ancestors of the Hebrew race, and if we are to believe the oldest document—that of the Jahvist—even the name Jehovah was in use long before Moses began his work.

(a) *The Meaning of the Name Jehovah.*—Who, then, was Jehovah, and whence was the knowledge of Him derived? No certain answer can be given to these questions.

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Naturally we turn first to the divine name and its etymology; but we get little foothold there. The correct pronunciation of the name is Yahwè,<sup>1</sup> and in Exod. iii. 14 it is said to mean, "I will be what I will be," or, "I am wont to be what I am wont to be;" in other words, through all change and in each manifestation of Himself Jehovah remains the same ever-faithful God. No one will deny that this is a beautiful and sublime interpretation—but we must remember that we meet with it first in a writer who lived centuries after Moses. It is, moreover, most unlikely, considering the social condition of the tribes in Mosaic times, that they would have understood or accepted a divine name so abstract and refined. Again, the name on this theory does not say what Jehovah will be. His fidelity, which is the important matter, has to be foisted in. Add to this that the antique man does not need to assure himself or others of his god's existence: he

<sup>1</sup> The form is not absolutely certain, but the pronunciation given in the text cannot be far wrong. Jehovah is certainly wrong, and has no support in antiquity.

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takes it for granted. To a modern interpretation, "he who causes being," there are much the same objections, besides another, and that a serious one, based on philological grounds. Other modern explanations are much more in accordance with the analogy of early religions which begin with material conceptions, and they are consistent with sound philology. Three of these may be mentioned here: viz., "he who casts down" rain, hail, lightning, &c.; "he who casts down" his foes; "he who blows," on which last supposition Jehovah was at first a wind-god like the Assyrian Ramman or the Teutonic Wodan. A good deal remained in the Hebrew conception of Jehovah when it had reached, on the whole, a much higher level, which makes one interpretation just given, viz., "he who casts down" lightning, &c., plausible. Thus Jehovah is described as appearing in storm (Exod. xix. 16, &c.), as kindling Elijah's sacrifice (1 Kings xviii. 36, *seq.*), and carrying him away at the end of his earthly life in a fiery chariot: "the voice of Jehovah" in Hebrew means the thunder. But the light-

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ning or heavenly fire is not expressed in the name itself. It has to be understood, and the interpretation is, it must be granted, exceedingly problematical.

(β) *Sinai the Primitive Seat of Jehovah's Worship.*—We are better informed on the primitive abode of Jehovah. The knowledge of Him did not come from Egypt. A God who conquered the gods of Egypt cannot have been of Egyptian origin Himself, and Hebrew religion, which began with the service of one God only and culminated in definite monotheism, has no real affinity with the pantheistic tendencies of Egyptian idolatry. We cannot gain much light upon the subject from the cuneiform inscriptions of Babylonia. Lately much discussion has arisen in the discovery of three clay tablets said to contain one, if not three, proper names, meaning “Yah is God.” The tablets belong to the age of Hammarabi, about 2250 b.c., and are not Babylonian, but Canaanite or Hebrew. The translation is questionable, and “Yawè,” not “Yā,” is the primary form of the divine name as the use of the Hebrew language and the

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occurrence of the name “Yahwè” on Mesha’s stone show, so that a derivation from the Babylonian god Ea is impossible, and we shall do well to acquiesce in Dr. Driver’s judgment that the names are as yet too isolated to admit of any confident inference. Besides, even if we knew that the names on the tablets meant “Yā is God,” we should be still quite in the dark as to the connection between this use of the name in remote antiquity and its subsequent history. But Jehovah was, so far back as our knowledge goes, the God of Sinai or Horeb.<sup>1</sup> It was not holy because Jehovah met the people there and gave them the law: it was already hallowed (Exod. iii. 1–5) by His presence, and therefore the Israelites travelled to the mount and received the law there. They asked Pharaoh’s leave to go into the wilderness, because they wished to offer sacrifice in Jehovah’s presence. Nay, according to one tradition, when they had left Sinai, Jehovah still tarried in His place, and sent His angel,

<sup>1</sup> We cannot be certain that these are two names of the same mountain; much less can we fix the precise position of either.

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or deputy (Exod. xxiii. 20), to lead His people on their way. So, too, in Deborah's song Jehovah is depicted as quitting the southern mountains and passing northwards amid storm and earthquake to contend with Sisera, while at a later time Elijah journeyed from north Israel on pilgrimage to Horeb. From the first, therefore, Jehovah was a God of the nomad tribes round Sinai, nor did the memory of His connection with the wilderness ever die out completely. The Rechabites, who planted no vineyards and built no houses (Jer. xxxv. ; 2 Kings x. 15), were His chosen servants. The Nazirites, who drank no wine, were His champions. Now it is just vineyards and houses which are the decided marks of the transition to agricultural life. A nomad may sow a field and go his way when he has reaped the harvest. But he who will make anything of a vineyard must stay and watch over it for years, while after he has taken the fruit the trees still retain their value.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> At the same time it is true that tillage gave the first impulse to settled life. Hence Demeter, the goddess of corn, was called *θεσμοφόρος*, and Ceres *legifera* (Verg. *Aen.* iv. 58).

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(γ) *Moses may have received fuller Knowledge of Jehovah from the Kenites. Jehovah known to Hebrew tribes before the time of Moses.*—This is all that can be said for certain on the origin of the worship of Jehovah, but there are plausible grounds for supposing that Moses received a powerful impulse to the zealous service of Jehovah from the Kenites or Kenizzites. They were associated with the Amalekites, though, unlike them, they were friendly to Israel, and they had their home in the region south of Judah and in Edom. To this clan Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses (Num. x. 29; Judges iv. 11), belonged. He is said to have been Israel's guide in the wilderness (Num. x. 29, *seq.*): it is he who offers the sacrifices of which Moses merely partakes (Exod. xviii. 10), and he regards the Exodus as the triumph of Jehovah, his God. These Kenites settled in Canaan, but maintained for a long time their own tribal life (Judges i. 16, v. 24, &c.), and the Rechabites, who had nomad proclivities, were their kins-folk. Here a question arises which is of the greatest interest, though no certain, or at least

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no complete, answer can be given to it. Was Jehovah known to the Hebrew tribes before the time of Moses? Hebrew tradition answers "yes." The name may have been new to them, though the oldest document in the Pentateuch does not even admit so much as this, but they at all costs recognised the God of their fathers in the Jehovah who sent Moses on his mission of deliverance to Egypt. We cannot doubt that there is a strong element of truth here, for otherwise it is hard to imagine why Moses was believed. It is reasonable to suppose that before the mission of Moses Jehovah was worshipped in various Hebrew tribes: Shaddai, a name of unknown meaning, generally but quite wrongly translated "Almighty" (Gen. xlix. 25), may have been a title which He bore. But if Jehovah had been known previously as a God of clans or single tribes, it was Moses who made Him the God of the tribes collectively, of the tribes united under Jehovah's banner for defence and aggression. This is the enduring merit of Moses: it is this to which he owes his place in the history of religion.

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(5) *Mosaic Institutions.* — Beyond this central fact that through Moses Jehovah became Israel's God our information is scanty in the last degree. We can but note an idea or an institution here and there which may be traced to Moses. No fragment of his writing has survived. The decalogue, as we shall try to prove further on, must be of later date than the settlement in Canaan. But the assumption that Jehovah was pre-eminently a God of war is assuredly Mosaic. It was the destruction of Pharaoh's host which made Israel Jehovah's people: old traditions were handed down of strife with the Amalekites in the wilderness and with the Amorites east of Jordan. So it was from the beginning, and this belief endured in pristine vigour all through the early history of the nation. The wars of Israel were "the wars of Jehovah" (1 Sam. xxv. 28), and it was invariably in war that the religious enthusiasm of Israel reached its highest pitch. We know, too, how warlike is the spirit of Deborah's song and Balaam's prophecies. "Who is like unto thee, O Israel," says an ancient writer (Deut.

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xxxiii. 29), “a people victorious through its God?” Samson, the legendary hero of the conflict with the Philistines, was a Nazirite vowed, as such, to observe the old simplicity of desert life and consecrated to the holy war. For battle was a religious function, and soldiers were consecrated to Jehovah (Isa. xiii. 3). The Arabs expected soldiers on service to observe sexual abstinence, and that was the Hebrew custom also (1 Sam. xxi. 5: comp. 2 Sam. xi., *seq.*).<sup>1</sup> In certain cases—*e.g.* of obstinate resistance in siege—enemies were put under the “herem,” or bann. The literal sense of the word is something consecrated and set apart from common use. We have the same root in the Arabic words, “harīm,” the women’s quarter, inaccessible to men, except the husband and the nearest relatives; “haram,” the sacred and inviolate territory of Mecca; “Muharram,” the sacred month, in which war used to be forbidden. The bann, however, was not a Mosaic institution: it seems rather to belong to Semitic religion

<sup>1</sup> So, no doubt from a religious motive, the Chatti, a great German tribe, would not cut their hair till they had slain a foe.—Tac. Germ. xxxi.

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generally.<sup>1</sup> At all events both name and thing are found on Mesha's stone. But it is convenient to mention it here when we are speaking of Jehovah and His place in war. It was in the bann that Jehovah glutted (1 Sam. xxviii. 18) His "fierce wrath" against His foes, and His heaviest vengeance fell on the Israelites themselves if they spared these objects of His hatred.

But how was a God who had a fixed abode on Horeb to fight for His people when they were at a distance? Sometimes, as we have seen, Jehovah left the mountain and went in person to the help of His people: this, as has been said, is the belief expressed in Deborah's song. According to an old section in the Pentateuch (Exod. xxiii. 20), Jehovah, when His people left Sinai, sent His angel to lead them on their way. But there was still a third means which secured the presence of Jehovah. This was the "ark" which late writers call the "ark of the covenant" or "the ark of the testimony," because, as

<sup>1</sup> The usage was familiar also to non-Semitic nations, such as the Teutonic Chatti (Tac. Ann. xiii. 57) and to Gauls (Caes. B.G. vi. 17).

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they imagined, it was the receptacle of two stone tables on which the decalogue was written. This view, however, is untenable, for the very nature of the ten commandments (if we may repeat a statement already made and anticipate the reasons to be given in the next chapter) shows that some of them cannot have preceded the occupation of Canaan. The earliest sources call the ark simply “the ark of Jehovah.” It was the focus of divine powers: there, as nowhere else, Jehovah was present. When it moved forward on its way, the people cried (Num. x. 35), “Arise, O Jehovah, and let Thine enemies be scattered,” and when the march ended, Jehovah was invited to return once more and dwell “among the myriads of Israel.” Long after the death of Moses (1 Sam. iv.) we learn that the Hebrews, hard pressed by the Philistines, bore the ark into the fray, just as the Philistines (2 Sam. v. 21) carried their idols with them for a like purpose. When the ark appeared the Israelites raised a mighty shout, and the Philistines were terrified for the moment, because a god had come into the

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camp of their enemies. It has been suggested that the ark is pre-Mosaic, and that it contained two sacred stones which the piety of later times identified with the two tables of the law. This ingenious supposition admits of no proof. An old fragment of tradition speaks of a tent outside the camp (Exod. xxxiii. 7, *seq.*) in which Moses received revelations from his God, and which in the absence of Moses was entrusted to the care of Joshua. Probably the tent was designed to shelter the ark, for we are told that Israelites went there to consult Jehovah. This they did through the mediation of Moses. How the answers were given, by lot or by the magical staff which is conspicuous in the legendary life of Moses, we do not know.

Great is the debt of Israel and of humanity to Moses. True, he did not teach that Jehovah is the only God. Monotheism is the birth of a much later time: it makes its earliest appearance on the pages of the literary prophets, and even there, in its initial form, is rudimentary and indirect. In fact, Moses did not busy himself with speculative truth.

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His work was practical: he taught his people what to do and how to feel. He bound them to the public worship of Jehovah, excluded that of all other gods, and at the same time inspired his people with a new trust, with a religious faith. This was not an easy task. There was no natural tendency among the Semites to believe in one only God or to serve one God alone. Far from it. Arabs and Phœnicians were perpetually adding to their Pantheon: Mesha, King of Moab, in his inscription, for all his devotion to the national deity, Chemosh, unites its name with that of another deity, apparently south Semitic and called Ashtor. It may be urged, and truly, that Moses, when he united the Israelites in the worship of Jehovah, had not to contend with an attractive mythology, since as yet the Hebrews had not passed much, if at all, beyond the animistic stage. Still, all through their history the Hebrews were prone to fall into the idolatry of the surrounding nations, and they were preserved from it against their natural proclivities by that long line of prophets in which Moses holds the foremost place.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE INFLUENCE OF SETTLED LIFE IN CANAAN AND THE RELIGION OF JEHOVAH TO THE PERIOD OF THE LITERARY PROPHETS

*Jehovah's Abode Transferred from Sinai to Canaan.*—The passage from nomad to agricultural life left, and could not but leave, a deep impress on the religion of the Hebrews. They had been used to think of their God as a deity of storm and lightning who dwelt on Sinai. This belief, even in its cruder form, did not die out with the conquest; still, Jehovah's servants came inevitably to the belief that “the God [of the Hebrew] hosts” had taken up His abode in the land which His people won and held by His grace. The ancient annalists and prophets are never weary of confessing that Canaan is at once His gift and His home: “Thou shalt bring them in and plant them in the

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mountain of thine inheritance, the place, O Jehovah, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, the sanctuary, O Jehovah, which Thy hands have established" (Exod. xv. 17). David, at the time a fugitive from the fury of Saul, curses (1 Sam. xxvi. 19, *seq.*) the foes who have driven him out so that he should no longer "cleave to the inheritance of Jehovah, saying, Go serve other gods." He also prays "that his blood may not fall to the ground away from the presence of Jehovah." The passage implies that Jehovah, though He might leave His land on occasion to help His people at a distance, dwelt habitually in Canaan. To die elsewhere was to perish away from His presence. Nay, to a man driven from Canaan the worship of Jehovah became an impossibility: he had perforce to "serve other gods" in the land of his exile. His position was like that of a loyal Englishman who prefers the laws and constitution of his own country, but knows that, if he establishes his home on the other side of the channel, he must conform to the rules of the French Republic. All the more

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did the Hebrews acknowledge Jehovah to be the God of the land, because they gloried in the agricultural art and highly valued the blessings of a fertile soil. This feeling receives notable expression in the story of Cain (Gen. iv. 1-16). Cain, or the tribe of which he is the eponymous hero, being guilty of bloodshed, was driven by a divine curse from the fields which he used to till into the wandering life of a nomad. Consequently he declares that henceforth he will be "hidden from the face" of his God. In effect (v. 16) he did leave Jehovah's presence, though the tattoo-mark on his forehead still indicated that he was a worshipper of Jehovah, and secured him a certain measure of protection. We need not multiply quotations. In the literary prophets, as well as in the latest books of the Old Testament, long after the Jews had become conscious and strict monotheists, the old forms of speech were retained; the old thoughts still lingered, though they could no longer be held consistently. Hosea (ix. 3, 4) takes for granted that no sacrifice can be made to

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Jehovah, no feast held in His honour, beyond the boundaries of Canaan. In the post-exilic book which bears his name, Jonah takes ship at Joppa that he may flee “from the presence of Jehovah.” To us Christians this view cannot but appear strange and unworthy. We know that God is a Spirit and seeks to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and in truth. Yet the belief that Canaan was Jehovah’s land is a marked advance on the older view, which localised His presence on Sinai. Remaining a God of war, He had also become a God of peace, and the manifold blessings of civilised life flowed from Him. He it was, “wonderful in counsel, excellent in wisdom” (Isa. xxviii. 23-29), who had trained His people in the arts of husbandry; corn, and wine, and oil, flax and wool, silver and gold were His gifts (Hos. ii. 8).

*The Three Great Agricultural Feasts.*—As we should have expected, the occupation of Canaan enlarged the festal calendar. Passover and New Moon had been celebrated in the wilderness, but now the Hebrew farmer

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sought the blessing of his God on the fruits of the earth. The festivities at sheep-shearing (1 Sam. xxv. 2, *seq.*; 2 Sam. xiii. 23, *seq.*) bore, we can scarcely doubt, a religious stamp, but these may date from the nomad period. The shepherd's occupation was of course continued in Canaan, and was especially prominent in Judah, where there is much less arable land than in the central districts of Palestine. But, at all events, three great feasts of the year were from the first purely agricultural. For this reason they had no fixed dates. In our own country the time of harvest, and therefore of harvest-home, varies according to season and place. Still more was this the case in Palestine, where the differences of climate are much greater than here in England. The harvest opened with the feast of unleavened bread, and the sacred rites began when the reaper put "the sickle into the standing corn" (Deut. xvi. 9). According to a custom long preserved (Lev. xxiii. 9, *seq.*), the priest waved a sheaf of barley, the grain which ripens first, before the altar. Seven days long only un-

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leavened bread was eaten, for the harvest must be hallowed from the first, so that there was no time to prepare new leaven, while leaven made from last year's grain would have marred the significance of the celebration.<sup>1</sup> Seven weeks later, when the harvest was over, two loaves of fine flour (Lev. xxiii. 17) were offered at the sanctuary. Lastly, when the threshing was done and the grapes and olives plucked, the Israelites kept the "feast of ingathering." This was the feast of feasts (1 Kings viii. 2, xii. 32), and it had a joy which was all its own. It occurred *in exitu anni*, at the end of the year, when the farmer's anxieties were mostly over and there was a pause before the new year opened with the autumn sowing. It was in this feast that Solomon dedicated the temple, and in the historical books other feasts are scarcely mentioned. It was then that the maidens of Israel were

<sup>1</sup> Other explanations are tenable, *e.g.*, that leaven is caused by putrefaction, or that it was a novelty rejected in ritual, which is always conservative. According to Jewish tradition, the show-bread was unleavened, which is an objection to the explanation in the text.

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wont to dance in the vineyards by the great sanctuary of Shiloh (Judges xxi. 19), and the name “Succoth,” or Tabernacles, was a reminiscence of the booths which the people erected year by year for use during the vintage. We learn from Judges ix. 27 that the Canaanite population of Shechem indulged in the same festivities, and it was no doubt the older population which set the example to the Hebrew invader. “They went out into the field and gathered the vineyard, and went into the house of their god and did eat and drink.”

Thus we see that the three great annual feasts, if we put the Passover out of reckoning for the moment, were originally purely agricultural. Subsequently an attempt was made to connect them with great epochs in the national history, but this was an afterthought, and even when the canon of the Old Testament was closed, the change had not been completed; for Philo, a younger contemporary of our Lord, is our earliest authority for the view that Pentecost, the feast of Weeks, commemorated the promul-

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gation of the law on Sinai. Turning to the weekly feast of the Sabbath, we find that it also is post-mosaic. A nomad needs no day of rest, for his ordinary work is light, nor could he observe a day of rest, if he desired to do so, since on the seventh day, as on all others, the cattle must be driven to the scanty herbage and to the springs of water. Nor could the Hebrews have learned to observe the weekly rest in Egypt, where the month is divided into sets of ten, not of seven, days. It is possible that the Sabbath came from the Babylonians and passed from them to the Canaanites, who in turn transmitted it to the Hebrews. It appears from the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, written about 1400 B.C., that from a remote antiquity the inhabitants of Canaan had been steeped in the language and culture of Babylon. Now, in a cuneiform lexicographical tablet the word "shabattum" is explained as "a day of rest of the heart," not, however, as we should at first sight think, for man's heart, but for that of the gods: on it the divine wrath is appeased and rests.

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Moreover, in calendars for two Assyrian months, the seventh, fourteenth, nineteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-eighth day are set apart, so that on these the king may not mount his chariot, eat roast flesh, sacrifice or take omens. It must indeed be granted that there are considerable difficulties in this theory that the Sabbath is of Babylonian origin. We have no proof that the name “shabattum” ever was given to the days of the month which have just been enumerated.<sup>1</sup> Again, these days do not divide the month into weeks, though we may, if we please, conjecture that the nineteenth day has been inserted because, when added to the previous month of thirty days, it furnishes the square of the sacred number seven ( $7 \times 7 = 49$ ). The most serious objection is that the Hebrew Sabbath was, as Hosea testifies (ii. 11), a day of “mirth”: it never became to the Jews, even in the latest times, a day of painful abstinence; and sacrifice, far from being forbidden or

<sup>1</sup> Even the reading “Shabattum” rests apparently on an emendation of Fred. Delitzsch.

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discouraged, was doubled on the Sabbath. If, however, we adopt the general opinion of scholars that the Hebrew Sabbath came from Babylon, it is still plain that the religious value of the Sabbath is, so far as we know, purely and simply Hebrew. A crass superstition about lucky and unlucky days has been changed into a beneficent institution, arbitrary rules for the conduct of the king into a day of refreshment for farmer and slave: a day containing within itself vast possibilities of spiritual development. Akin to the weekly Sabbath is the Sabbatical year (Exod. xxiii. 10), on which by ancient custom the land lay fallow. This was originally no more than a point of good husbandry: it was well for the soil to rest, since as yet the rotation of crops was not dreamed of. Different fields might lie fallow on different years, so that no practical difficulty, such as danger of famine, presented itself. But the same humane spirit which ennobled the Sabbath was at work here also. The poor might claim as their own the natural growth not only of

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the field, but also of the olive and vine-yard.

*Oblations at Other Times.*—Other offerings of agricultural producee were not connected, or at least not so closely connected, with stated feasts. Thus the story of the theophany at Bethel, when Jacob spent the night there, is, partly at least, a temple myth intended to explain the ancient custom of paying tithes at that time-honoured sanctuary. The father of the tribes, so the legend ran, sought divine protection as he was setting forth on a long and perilous journey, and promised (Gen. xxviii. 22) to tithe his goods in favour of the shrine if his prayer was heard. We have also early evidence (1 Sam. xxi. 6) for the custom of offering showbread, *i.e.* loaves set before “the face of Jehovah,” which were, after the lapse of a week, eaten by the priest. The consecration of first-born males in the flock belongs to nomad times, but the rule was extended (Exod. xxxiv. 20) so as to include the first-born males of ox and ass. The former were to be used for sacrificial feasts: the latter were to be bought back by the substitution of a lamb

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or else killed. Libations of wine became (Amos ii. 8; Hos. ix. 4) prominent features in the ritual, and the general principle was acknowledged that the best and the earliest produce (Exod. xxxiv. 26) should be presented to Jehovah. There are, moreover, customs which lack early attestation, but which have an ancient look. It is highly probable that they are of ancient institution, and were preserved by the innate conservatism of ritual when Jewish worship was codified and reduced to system after the exile. Thus the law on tree-fruit (Lev. xix. 23, *seq.*) is a case in point. For three years it was to be left untouched: on the fourth it was consecrated to Jehovah. So, too, libations of olive oil must have come into use among the Hebrews soon after the occupation of Canaan, and had been, no doubt, common among the older inhabitants, as they were among the Babylonians.

*Gradual Nature of the Conquest.*—So far we have been dealing with changes which must have come, even if Israel had by a single stroke annihilated the older popula-

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tion. As a matter of fact, Israel did nothing of the kind. The Canaanites were conquered and absorbed very slowly (Exod. xxiii. 30). The attack was made on different sides by small confederations of Hebrew tribes acting independently. Thus Reuben and Gad settled east of the Jordan and were severed from the main stream of Hebrew progress. Judah crossed the river and pressed southwards. Levi and Simeon (Gen. xxxiv.) made a raid upon Shechem in the centre of Palestine and fared badly. Afterwards the house of Joseph attempted the same feat with better fortune. Issachar and Zebulon marched over the plain of Jezreel and secured homes in the north. On the whole the low-lying lands remained in Canaanite possession, while in some quarters Canaanites and Israelites had the upper hand alternately. Of the Asherites we are told that "they dwelt among the Canaanites" — *i.e.* they had to content themselves with a subject position under Canaanite lords. There must have been great admixture of foreign blood, a fact

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indicated in the ancient legends when they speak of some among the tribes as born of concubines. Nor must it be forgotten that the Canaanites were far ahead of the Hebrews in civilisation. All this being so, and that it was so the first chapter of Judges proves,<sup>1</sup> it is no wonder that the Hebrews worshipped for long at the old shrines.

*Adoption of Canaanite Shrines.* — Each town of importance had its “high place”; for the Semites, like Indians and Persians, Greeks and Romans, looked on mountains and hills as the favourite abodes of deity. The very name of Mount Hermon denotes its sacred reputation; Mount Peor had its Baal, or divine owner. Carmel (1 Kings xviii. 19) and the Mount of Olives (2 Sam. xv. 32; 1 Kings xi. 7) were holy places: in an ancient song (Deut. xxxiii. 18, *seq.*) Zebulon and Issachar “call the peoples to

<sup>1</sup> An editorial hand has tried to reconcile the statements in Judges i. with the latest account, according to which Joshua made a clean sweep of the Canaanites, by placing the events in Judges i. after Joshua’s death. This theory is absolutely incredible, and is refuted, *ex abundantia*, by a comparison of Joshua xiii. 13; xv. 13-19, 63; xvi. 10.

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the mountain" (possibly Tabor) that they may "offer sacrifices of righteousness." Many other sacred places are known to us by name: Bethel, Ophrah, Ramah, Bethlehem, so that the local worship cannot have been confined to mountains and hills. Now Hebrew writers were well aware that the Canaanites had recognised the sanctity of these places before the advent of Israel, and the Deuteronomist (xii. 2) urges this as a reason for their destruction. For ages, however, they were treated in a more conciliatory spirit. The belief arose that they had been hallowed not by local Baals but by Jehovah, who had manifested Himself there to His favourite servants, the ancestors of the tribes. We have a fine example in Gen. xxviii. 10-22 of the consummate art with which an ancient superstition is transfigured into a revelation of Israel's God. Thus local worships, which it would have been hard, or rather impossible, to eradicate at once, were made subservient to a higher religion. Mohammed followed a like plan with the heathen shrine at Mecca: he de-

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stroyed its idols and bound it to memories of Adam and Abraham, of Hagar and Ishmael. And so, but without the same defiance of truth, the Catholic Church adopted feasts of pagan origin, baptizing them into a new spirit. No doubt this moderation, wise as it was, had its perils. The prophets bear full witness to the ease with which merrymaking over corn and wine degenerated into immorality.<sup>1</sup>

*Of Immoral Worship.*—The abuse reached its climax in “holy women” and “holy men”—*i.e.* persons who surrendered their chastity to the gods of fertility and prostituted themselves in their service. We know that this revolting practice obtained not only in north Israel (Hos. iv. 14), but also in Judah (Gen. xxxviii. ; 1 Kings xiv. 24, xv. 12, xxii. 46); even in the great temple at Jerusalem (2 Kings xxiii. 7) these victims of lust had special apartments assigned to them. Moreover, it is clear from Deut. xxiii. 18, *seq.*, that this iniquity

<sup>1</sup> So Pentheus, Eur. *Bacchæ*, 225, complains that the worship of Dionysus the wine god was the mask of lust.

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intruded itself into the worship of Jehovah, though the purity inherent in Hebrew religion aroused an earnest reaction against it.<sup>1</sup>

*Of Images.*—The use of images became general after the conquest. A brazen serpent, the original significance of which cannot be discovered now, stood (2 Kings xviii. 4) in the temple at Jerusalem. An image known as “ephod,” either because it consisted of wood or base metal overlaid with gold, or because, like many images in Roman Catholic countries, it was clothed in a cope or vestment, was set up by Gideon at Ophrah (Judges viii. 26, *seq.*) and by Micah (Judges xvii. xviii.) in the hill country of Ephraim. There was also an ephod at Nob (1 Sam. xxi. 9), one of the chief centres of worship in Saul’s reign. Goliath’s sword was placed behind it as a trophy. The priest sometimes carried it with him (1 Sam. xxiii. 6) and consulted it (1 Sam. xiv. 18; LXX.) for purposes

<sup>1</sup> It is remarkable that in the code of Hammarabi the “Kēdēshoth,” or “holy women,” seem to have been vestals. In the passages cited above the Hebrew text has “consecrated woman” or “man” where the English has “whores,” &c.

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of divination. Here we may remark that the ephod as an image is to be carefully distinguished from the ephod of linen, which was a kind of surplice. Apparently these images were not intended to present a likeness of the god, since the mental picture formed by the worshipper was as yet scarcely definite enough for that. Rather the image was supposed to provide the god with a body which he made his own, and in which he was accessible to those who sought his counsel or help. This would account for the habitual identification of the image and the god. The Canaanite influence shows itself clearly in the worship of Jehovah under the form of an ox. This custom was maintained in the great northern sanctuaries of Bethel and Dan, as also at Samaria, the northern capital: neither Elijah nor Elisha had, so far as we know, anything to say against it, and it continued till the destruction of the northern kingdom in 722. Certainly the use was not borrowed from Egypt, for Apis and Menevis were live animals and not images. Nor was it in-

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vented by the nomad Hebrews. The familiar story of Aaron's concession to the idolatrous wishes of the people in the absence of Moses cannot be accepted in its literal sense. It is written with the obvious design of discrediting the northern ritual, and it is unlikely on the face of it. The ox in Palestine and the district to the south is an animal of settled agricultural life, and the dry and barren steppes of Sinai are ill fitted for the breeding of large cattle. The name "Ashteroth Karnaim," *i.e.* "Ashteroth of the horns" (Gen. xiv. 5), is evidence for the existence of Canaanite images of Astarte in the form of a cow, and the probability is that the image of the ox was transferred from the local Baals and changed into the likeness of Jehovah in His conquering might. One very common form of idol remains to be spoken of, viz., the teraphim. We may infer from Hos. iii. 4 that they were deemed indispensable to worship, and this inference is confirmed by the mention of them in David's house (1 Sam. xix. 13, 16). We know that omens were taken

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from them (2 Kings xxiii. 24; Ezek. xxi. 21), and as Michal is said to have put them in David's bed with a pillow at the head when Saul's emissaries were watching her husband's house and he had escaped through a window, we may reasonably believe that they bore the human form. Here, however, knowledge and even plausible conjecture come to an end. The derivation of the word is quite obscure, and the theory that the teraphim were images of ancestors has no foundation, except a fanciful association of the word with "rephaim," *i.e.* shades. Many other derivations have been suggested, none of them convincing.

*Of Temples with Attendant Priests.*—The introduction of images led naturally to the building of temples,<sup>1</sup> because the idol needed shelter from the weather and a house to dwell in. There were temples at Shiloh and afterwards at Nob, as well as at Bethel and Dan and at Samaria, and no doubt the list

<sup>1</sup> Homer speaks sometimes of temples, and once of "a great shrine" (*ἄδυτον*), but more commonly of sacred domains and groves (*τέμενος*, *ἄλσος*). The only image which he definitely describes is the seated figure of the Trojan Athene (Il. vi. 92).

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might easily have been enlarged but for the meagreness of our records. In Israel as in Greece the temple was also a place for the accumulation of sacred gifts (Judges ix. 4), and one in which oracles were given. Therefore a priest was needed to guard the shrine and its deposit, and to interpret the will of the god. We are apt to suppose that priest and sacrifice are inseparable, but the old view was quite different. Sacrifice might be offered by the father of a family, such as Manoah (Judges xiii. 16); by popular leaders like Gideon (Judges vi. 26); by prophets like Elijah (1 Kings xviii.); by kings like David and Solomon (1 Kings iii. 4, *seq.*, ix. 25). Originally, indeed, all slaughter of animals fit to appear on the altar was sacrificial. The priest was not, in the first instance, one who sacrificed, but one who "carried an ephod"<sup>1</sup> or image. It was his office to decide doubtful cases by the sacred lot. His decision was habitually sought on matters of the utmost importance, *e.g.*, on military expeditions

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xiv. 3. "Wearing a [linen] ephod" is a mis-translation. At verse 18 see the margin of R.V.

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(Judges xviii. 5, 6; 1 Sam. xxiii. 2, xxx. 7), and in questions of life and death for the chief persons in the State (1 Sam. xiv. 18, xxii. 13, *seq.*). The oracle was given in presence of the ephod by means of Urim and Thummim. So much is plain from 1 Sam. xiv. 41, *seq.*, which should be emended thus by the help of the Septuagint version: "And Saul said, O Jehovah, God of Israel, why dost Thou not answer Thy servant to-day? If this fault be in me or Jonathan my son, give Urim, and if it be in Israel, give Thummim." The precise nature, however, of the Urim and Thummim is shrouded in mystery: we cannot even be sure that the correct vocalisation of the words has been preserved. However, the information which we have is proof sufficient that the priests of the great shrines exercised a profound and permeating influence on Hebrew life. Their persons were sacred and inviolable: Saul's servants (1 Sam. xxii. 17) could not be persuaded to lift their hands against them, and Saul himself brought ruin on his own house by his sacrilegious massacre of the priests at Nob.

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Moreover, the priests did not merely decide isolated cases by lot: they taught the difference between clean and unclean: they judged cases brought before them in accordance with the principles of Jehovah's religion, principles which became clearer and more consistent with themselves and with humanity as time went on. This is expressed in the Blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 10): "They shall teach Jacob thy judgments: And Israel thy revelation." Still it would be an anachronism to transfer the systematised hierarchy of the sacerdotal code to the period of the judges, or indeed to any period prior to the exile. Naturally, in a guild of priests the functions of one member were more important than those of another. There was, for example, a leading priest at Bethel (Amos vii. 10), while at Jerusalem the chief priest had "a second priest" or vicar under him, with others of still lower rank to watch the threshold and the door (2 Kings xxii. 4, xxiii. 4, xxv. 18). But the fact that there were many legitimate shrines each with its body of priests put the existence of a

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high-priest in the post-exilic sense out of the question. Again there was no strict hereditary right. The appointment of a priest depended on the patron who “filled his hand” (Judges xvii. 5), *i.e.* paid him his stipend. Thus in Judges xvii. xviii., Micah, a private person who keeps an ephod and teraphim in his house, first of all makes his own son his chaplain; then he commits the office to a Levite, and in the end the Levite travels northward with six hundred Danites and becomes priest of the tribe. Bethel in the reign of Jeroboam II. was “a royal sanctuary” or chapel (Amos vii. 13), and therefore under the king’s surveillance. As a layman might appoint, so a layman might on occasion dismiss a priest. Solomon deposed Abiathar in spite of his ancient lineage, and put Zadok, a *novus homo*, in his place (1 Kings ii. 27).

*The Levitical Priests.*—Yet even before the institution of the kingly power there was one tribe or body of professional men who had come to be considered as a tribe which was especially associated with the priesthood.

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They were called Levites. Unfortunately we cannot tell what the word means. We do not even know whether it was from the outset a proper name or an appellative. Various theories on the history of the Levites have been advanced, none of which rises above a certain degree of probability. The following points, however, deserve attention. In a very ancient poem which supplies the earliest mention of the Levites which we possess (Gen. xlix. 5, *seq.*), the Levites are spoken of as a secular tribe with a bad name for rapine and cruelty. “Simeon and Levi are brethren: . . . cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.” The story of Micah first implies their special adaptation for the priesthood. He rejoices in having secured a Levite to officiate in his oratory: “Now know I that Jehovah will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.” In the Blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 8, *seq.*) things have moved a step forward. Here Levites are not only the favourite, but in the poet’s

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opinion the sole legitimate priests: "Of Levi he said, Thy Urim and Thummim are with him thou lovest. . . . They shall put the smoke of sacrifice in thy nostrils, and whole burnt offerings on thine altar." As yet, however, the poet's principle did not meet with universal assent, and the exclusive claims of the Levites were precarious. He prays fervently against their opponents, perhaps their rivals: "Smite through the loins of them that rise up against him, and of them that hate him that they rise not again." From all this we may gather, with a reasonable degree of confidence, that the Levites were a tribe which having failed to secure land by an assault on Shechem (Gen. xxxiv.), and having incurred much odium even among their kinsfolk, betook themselves to the priestly office, and with such success that at last all priests came to be regarded as sons of Levi. But one point of vital moment remains to be added. Moses, according to tradition, was a Levite, and Micah's Levite was the progenitor of a priestly guild in the north of Palestine which

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traced its genealogy to the great leader. This may, in part, account for the priestly character which attached itself to the Levites. “The children of Dan set up for themselves the graven image [which had been stolen from Micah], and Jonathan the son of Gershom the son of Moses,<sup>1</sup> he and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity of the land” (Judges xviii. 30).

### GENERAL VIEW OF PRE-PROPHETIC RELIGION

#### A. *Its Moral and Theological Defects*

(a) *The Worship of Jehovah alone not always Maintained.*—We may now proceed to a general view of the nature and char-

<sup>1</sup> A scribe has inserted in the Hebrew word “Mshh” (=Moses) the letter “n,” thus turning it into “M<sup>n</sup>shh” (=Manasseh). The letter “n” is a so-called “hanging letter,” *i.e.* it is evidently a correction. The scribe was shocked at the possession of a Mosaic genealogy by schismatic and idolatrous priests, and accordingly in audacious defiance of chronology he made Gershom a son of Manasseh, because, as the Talmud puts it, he did the works of that wicked king. The false reading became current in the versions of the Latin Vulgate, though Field (Origen. Hexapl., vol. i. p. 462) cites a few MSS. of the LXX. which give the true text. Conflate texts, “Son of Manasseh, son of Gershom, son of Moses,” also occur.

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acter of Jehovah as the Israelites apprehended it before Amos and his successors in the prophetic office taught them better. Here our information is tolerably complete, though we cannot always feel certain how much of that which strikes us as imperfect and unspiritual is to be explained by the rude and undeveloped state of religion, how much is to be regarded as degeneracy and declension from the standard set by Moses. Assuredly Moses imposed the exclusive worship of Jehovah. Were the Israelites faithful to this fundamental precept? The answer to this question would be easy indeed if we could accept without qualification the accounts given in the book of Judges and elsewhere in the historical and prophetic books. The editor of Judges, deeply imbued with the beliefs of the Deuteronomical school, has set the old legends in a framework of his own. The same series of events recurs with mechanical regularity. Time after time did the Hebrews forsake the service of Jehovah for that of foreign gods. Jehovah thereupon lets their

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foes reduce them to serfdom: in the lapse of years He is moved to pity, and sends a hero for their rescue. This reiterated process cannot be accepted as historical. Even the reproaches of the prophets cannot or at least need not always be taken in the strict and literal sense. To such a man as Hosea the sensual rites which disfigured the festal celebrations seemed no better than the service of the local Baals; yet it by no means follows that those who indulged in orgiastic worship which they had learned from the Canaanites had any deliberate intention of renouncing their allegiance to Jehovah, or even of uniting the service offered to Him with that of other deities. Protestant writers have charged Roman Catholics with practical polytheism; but the charge, whether true or false, is at all events quite different from the absurdity of supposing that Roman Catholics, even at their worst, are conscious polytheists. Indeed Amos (ii. 7) implies that gross immorality was practised in Jehovah's honour, though in reality it was an outrage on His holy name. Again, nothing can be made

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of the fact that Hebrew proper names are sometimes compounded with Baal. When Saul called his son Ish-baal, *i.e.* "man of Baal,"<sup>1</sup> or David his son, Beeliada, *i.e.* "Baal Knoweth," they did not so much as dream that they were disloyal to their God. In itself Baal means "owner," especially owner of land or of a wife: it requires the addition of a genitive, such as Hermon, Peor, or the like, to determine it in the idolatrous sense. Without that addition it might be and was applied to Jehovah as lord of the land and also as the husband of collective Israel. Hosea (ii. 16) is our authority for this usage, and though he strongly discourages it, his reason lies in the dangerous confusion which the title Baal tended to foster. However, it is scarcely conceivable that the Israelites never took part in the adoration of local Baals. From time immemorial men had prayed to them for their blessing on the soil,

<sup>1</sup> "Ishbosheth," "man of shame," is the form familiar to us. This, however, has come from Rabbinical custom which shrank from uttering the hated word "Baal" and substituted "Bosheth" (= shame) instead. In Rom. xi. 4 Baal has the feminine article, "Bosheth" being of that gender.

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and it is incredible, considering the admixture of foreign blood in the tribes, that the Israelites never united the worship of the God who had revealed Himself on Sinai with that of the Canaanite gods. We may even grant that there is an element of truth in the Deuteronomic view to which we have referred. War, and, above all, war with their neighbours, would be the very time in which the consciousness that Jehovah alone was Israel's God revived, and then past disaster would be set to the account of past infidelity in His service.

(β) *Early Israelites did not know Jehovah as the only God, as Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient.*—While, however, the Israelites never quite lost the belief that they were committed to the sole worship of Jehovah, they had no idea of denying that other gods existed. Jehovah, to begin with, is a personal name like that of Zeus or Apollo, and there would have been no reason for so distinguishing Him, had He been regarded as the one true God. He was the best and greatest of gods, but He was no more

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than that. Jephthah acknowledges frankly (Judges xi. 24) that Chemosh had given his people their land just as Jehovah had bestowed their territory on the tribes of Israel. Long after Jephthah's victory, when the Hebrews were ravaging Moab, they were forced to retreat, because the fury of Chemosh was aroused against them. Consonant with this belief that many gods existed is the limitation in the divine attributes ascribed to Jehovah. No doubt, His power is very great. He can "save by many or by few" (1 Sam. xiv. 6): nothing is too wonderful for Him (Gen. xviii. 14), but rhetoric of this kind must not be pressed into an assertion of absolute omnipotence. On the contrary, He is represented as taking precautions against Adam, when he has eaten of the tree of knowledge, and against the impious men who built the tower of Babel. Similarly, though He can display His power in other countries, humbling the gods of Egypt and shattering Dagon's image in Philistia, He is not omnipresent. It is possible, as we have already seen, to pass beyond His "face," or presence,

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and often for this reason He acts mediately by His angels or by spirits good and evil. He has superhuman knowledge, and can read Sarah's secret thoughts, but instead of being omniscient, He goes down to Sodom and investigates the report He has heard about the cities of the plain. He is material, not spiritual: He makes man in His own likeness: He walks in the cool of the evening, and the sound of His step is heard in the garden of Eden: He closes the door of the ark (Gen. vii. 16): He eats with Abraham (Gen. xviii. 8, xix. 3): He writes on the tables of stone (Exod. xxxii. 16).

(γ) *Ancient Conception of Holiness.*—One epithet of Jehovah deserves particular attention, because we may easily read into it a meaning which is not there. He is said to be “Kadōsh,” a word commonly rendered “holy.” The primary force of the “Kadōsh” is not ethical. “Kadōsh” to the ancient Hebrew signified that which is separated from ordinary use; that which is taboo; that which is dangerous to approach. Priests are holy apart altogether from their personal char-

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acter, because they are dedicated to Jehovah's service: places and oblations are holy for the same reason, viz., that they were separated from profane use. Even the notions of holy and accursed may pass into each other: a criminal, for instance, may be placed under a ban and devoted to the vengeance of a god, and the Latin word *sacer* always retained the twofold sense of sacred and execrable. Now Jehovah was esteemed holy by pre-eminence. It is death for the common man to see Him. He inspires an awe unknown to the Greeks among whom the gods appear freely to bless and help those whom they love. It is perilous to look upon, and much more to touch the ark in which Jehovah dwells: witness the dire vengeance which fell on the people of Beth-shemésh and on Uzzah (1 Sam. vi. 19; 2 Sam. vi. 6). Actions are sometimes attributed which positively contradict the notion of holiness, as we understand it. The older parts of the Old Testament recognise no clear distinction between physical and moral evil, or, again, between things which Jehovah does and

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those which He simply permits. Speaking generally, we may say that everything abnormal or extraordinary, whether good or bad, was referred to the divine agency. Strange passion and infatuated folly were not so much the cause as the sign of His wrath. Thus, David conjectures that Jehovah may have investigated the murderous enmity of Saul against him (1 Sam. xxvi. 19): it was He (1 Kings xii. 15) who led Rehoboam into the folly which stung the northern tribes into permanent revolt: it was He (1 Kings xxii. 20, *seq.*) who sent a lying spirit into Ahab's prophets.

*Nobler Elements.* — Of course these unworthy conceptions of Jehovah were united with others of a far loftier kind. All the blessings which Israel receives come from Him. For us in the full light of Christian revelation the stories of the Patriarchs are strangely instructive and attractive. Abraham is still the father of the faithful, the representative, or, as some would have it, the personified ideal of all who in the long course of the ages rely upon God's sure

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word. Despite the defects noted above there is a strong moral element in Jehovah's government. He hates the sensual wickedness which brought ruin on the cities of the plain. He punishes perjury: murderers are to be dragged even from the altar (Exod. xxi. 14). He protects widows and orphans, and foreigners who had taken up their abode among the Hebrews, and could not therefore appeal to their own clan (Exod. xxii. 20-26). He punished injustice even if committed by His own people to the injury of aliens. Thus He sent famine on Israel because Saul had in violation of an old treaty massacred the Gibeonites. Accordingly the debt of blood had to be exacted from seven of Saul's descendants who were "impaled before Jehovah" (2 Sam. xxi.). The story of Nathan and his bold rebuke of David's double crime, murder and adultery, may have been amplified and embellished by the pious fancy of a later age. But there is no reason to doubt that Nathan did rebuke the king and recall him to his better self, and at the very least it is plain that people

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looked on the death of David's son as the penalty of his guilt.

### B. *Its Limited Sphere*

(a) *It was Limited to Israel.*—Still at its best, and apart from its moral defects, the early religion of Israel was set in narrow limits. Its message was for Israel alone. Joseph, so far as our information goes, made no attempt to convert the Egyptians, or even the daughter of the Egyptian priest whom he married. Elijah enjoyed the hospitality of a heathen woman in Zarephath, but he left her as she was, and said not a word against the Baals which she must have worshipped. What a contrast here with Daniel's conduct as reported in a work of the Maccabean age! Hebrew religion still in these early days had something of the tolerance which belongs to polytheism.

(β) *It was for this Life only.*—Even for Israel long after the period with which we are now concerned, the blessing and the curse of Jehovah affected this life only.

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The oldest belief about the spirits of the dead seems to have been that they hovered about the graves in which the members of the family were buried. A man was, in the most literal sense, “gathered to his fathers.” Afterwards the ghosts of the dead were, as it was thought, assembled in Sheol, a place of darkness beneath the earth, enclosed with barred gates, and admitting of no escape. There the spirit prolonged a shadowy resemblance of life on earth: kings sat on phantom thrones (Isa. xiv. 9); Samuel appeared to Saul (1 Sam. xxviii. 14) wearing his mantle. But nothing worth calling life remained: in death “there is no remembrance of Thee [*i.e.* of Jehovah], and who will give thee thanks in the pit?” No difference was made in the lot of good or bad: “Tomorrow thou and thy sons,” says Samuel to Saul, “shall be with me.” Small marvel that life prolonged to a good old age was reckoned to be a supreme blessing.

(γ) *It was addressed to the Nation rather than the Individual.*—Another limitation is to the modern mind still more surprising. It is

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the nation rather than the individual with whom Jehovah deals. We do not mean to deny that God was thought to exercise care for private persons. But as yet the sense of individual responsibility had not emerged. Jehovah visited the sins of the fathers on the children even to the third and fourth generation: Saul's descendants had to pay the penalty of Saul's sin; and it was a startling novelty when later writers, notably Ezekiel, insisted that a man must stand or fall on his own merits. It was Israel, and the king, as representing Israel (Hosea xi. 1; 2 Sam. vii. 14), who was the son of Jehovah: it was Israel and not the Israelite who was immortal. The individual was almost absorbed in the people to which he belonged. This is the feeling which animates the prophetic words of Baalam. "Who can count the dust of Jacob, or number the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the upright, and let my posterity be like theirs."

(δ) *It was Ritual rather than Moral.*—We have interesting evidence that ritual was much more prominent than morality in early

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Hebrew religion. Morality there certainly was, as has been already pointed out, but it was not the dominant element. Custom was the great authority for right and wrong. "Let them ask in Abel and Dan," so the old saying went (2 Sam. xx. 18, text emended from LXX.), whether that had ever come to an end which the "faithful in Israel had established." The meaning is that Abel was a place which preserved old customs in their purity, so that any one who wanted guidance had best go there. It was enough to condemn an action that no such thing was commonly done in Israel (2 Sam. xiii. 12), and all such conduct was accounted "folly" (really iniquity). But before any larger code of duties between Israelite and Israelite was drawn up, the memory was assisted by a table of ten short commandments<sup>1</sup> comprising duties to Jehovah. These ten words or commandments are distinctly mentioned in Exod. xxxiv. 28, but the preceding text has been tampered with, since it contains twelve

<sup>1</sup> Goethe in 1773 first called attention to this older decalogue. Its primitive character is universally admitted.

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commandments. They are these: “1. Thou shalt worship no other god. 2. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods. 3. The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. 4. All that openeth the womb is mine. 5. Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt not. 6. Thou shalt observe the feast of weeks. 7. And the feast of ingathering at the year’s end. 8. Three times in the year shalt all thy males see Jehovah’s face. 9. Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread. 10. Neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover be left over to the morning. 11. The first of the firstfruits of thy ground shalt thou bring into the house of Jehovah thy God. 12. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother’s milk.” We may, with little scruple, cancel the eighth commandment, which only sums up that which has been said before: what other precept must be sacrificed to get the required decad is doubtful. But that does not matter much. It is at all events clear that this old decalogue descends from an age unaffected by the ethical monotheism of the prophets.

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It is mainly ritual, but it proscribes idolatrous practices (see No. 12), and leaves ceremonial details to use and wont or to the inclination of the worshipper. Scholars have observed that molten images, not images absolutely, are prohibited, and they are then of opinion that the decalogue emphasises the simplicity of Jehovah's requirements, in contrast with the elaborate ritual of the Canaanite Baals. If the interpretation will hold, we may compare the "Book of the Covenant,"<sup>1</sup> which (Exod. xx. 23) forbids gold and silver images, and lays down the rule that Jehovah's altar (Exod. xx. 25) shall be made of earth, or at least of unhewn stone.

It must be confessed that a feeling of disappointment inevitably results from this review of Hebrew religion in its early stages. The unique character of the religion so far does not lie on the surface. There is a moral element in the worship of Jehovah, but the same thing may be said, and said truly,

<sup>1</sup> A series of judgments, *i.e.* judicial decisions on questions of civil and criminal law and of commandments relating to life and worship, found in Exod. xxi.-xxiii. It is older than Amos and Hosea.

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of Homeric religion. There the gods, as Jehovah in Israel, visit men (Od. xvii. 485, *seq.*) to reward good deeds and punish wrong-doing. Zeus manifests his wrath by tempest (Il. xvi. 385) when men pervert justice, and he is the guardian of the stranger and of the poor (Od. vi. 207). The gods are provoked by cruelty such as the use of poisoned arrows (Od. i. 263). The Homeric Greek no less than the Hebrew lifted his hands in prayer and implored the mercy of Zeus (Il. xxiv. 301). He acknowledged that a god can save “even from afar”; that Zeus can do all things (Od. iv. 237), and that gods know all things (Od. iv. 379). There are in the Homeric poems approaches to belief in the divine unity, for Zeus is the father of gods and men, and in the *Odyssey* the power of all the gods appears to centre in his single person. In some respects the Homeric Greeks were morally superior to the Hebrews: they were more averse to cruelty (see above), and, in the story of Laertes, who honours the noble and beautiful captive Eurykleia but does not make

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her his mistress, “fearing the wrath of his wife” (Od. i. 433), we have a higher ideal of marriage than that which presents itself in the families of the Hebrew patriarchs, where Sarah and Leah and Rachel offer their female slaves to their husbands as concubines, and Abraham, to escape personal danger, imperils the honour of his wife (Gen. xii., xx.). To some extent the remarks made before on the sole worship of Jehovah and His manifestation in history, and upon the results produced by the religion of Israel, have anticipated the answer to this objection. Still, the contrast between the religion of Amos or Hosea and that of the older documents must needs arrest our attention. How was that gulf bridged over?

### C. *Influences in Favour of Religious Progress*

(a) *The Monarchy*.—Much was due to the institution of the monarchy. In Gideon’s time the tribes in the middle of Palestine felt the want of it, and in the deadly conflict

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with the Philistines a king became an absolute necessity. In no other way could union be effected, and the writers nearest the event were well aware how great a boon they had received in the royal government. "He [the king] shall save my people out of the hand of the Philistines :" so Jehovah's promise ran, and Samuel gave the first king an enthusiastic welcome: "Hath not Jehovah anointed thee for a prince over His people Israel ? and thou shalt rule over the people of Jehovah, and thou shalt save it from the hand of its enemies" (1 Sam. ix. 16, x. i. ; LXX.). Under David the belt of Canaanite cities along the plain of Jezreel which parted central from northern Palestine, Jerusalem and the belt of Canaanite cities which stood between the central tribes and Judah were brought into subjection. The unity of the people brought life and strength to its religion. As God of Israel, Jehovah was without a rival, and local cults of other gods fell into the background. Nor did the regal office in itself disturb the purity of religion. The king did not, like the Pharaohs or Homeric

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chieftains, make any claim to divine descent. He was simply “the anointed of Jehovah,” consecrated to His service by the sacred oil, so that it was sacrilege to lift up a hand against him (1 Sam. xxiv. 5, 6). It was his business to protect and enforce the religion which gave him the place he held.

(β) *The Early Prophets*.—The religion of Jehovah also found powerful allies in the early prophets. The origin of the Hebrew word for prophet, viz. “nābī,” is much disputed. “A spokesman” or “interpreter”<sup>1</sup> is perhaps the radical meaning. We know that in the ninth century B.C. the Tyrian Baal had numerous prophets, but on the relation between the prophets of Israel and Phœnicia we have no light. All we can say is that prophets of Israel appear first, so far as our knowledge goes, in the struggle with the Philistines. We find them again gathering in troops to encourage Ahab, who, with all his faults, was certainly a

<sup>1</sup> Comp. the Babylonian Nebo, the interpreter of the gods, and the position of Apollo in Æsch. Eum., 19 : Διὸς Προφήτης ἐστὶ Λοξίας Πατρός. “One who pours forth” inspired words is, according to another theory, the root meaning.

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brave and able king, in his expedition against the Aramæans for the recovery of Ramoth Gilead. These prophets spoke under strong excitement, and remind us of the dervishes who accompanied the Mahdi in the Soudan. Their frenzy was infectious. Saul, for example, when he came to the house of a prophetic guild, “stripped off his clothes and behaved himself like a prophet before Samuel, and lay down naked all that day and all that night.” “Madman” was the epithet sometimes used to describe a prophet (2 Kings ix. 11), and the head priest at Jerusalem was expected to keep in order men who “were mad and behaved as prophets” in the temple (Jer. xxix. 26). We must beware, however, of reading modern sentiment into the records of the past. Madness in the ancient east would provoke, as indeed it still does, reverence rather than pity or contempt. Saul’s mania was not inconsistent with lofty thoughts on his own destiny and that of the nation which he led. The frenzy, then, of the prophets was thought to be inspired by

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Jehovah and stimulated the courage of the people to fight in His cause. The Nazirites, men "devoted" to an abstinence which recalled the infancy of the nation and the wanderings in the wilderness, helped to fan the flame of enthusiasm for Jehovah, and of abhorrence for Canaanite pollution. Of them something has been said in the preceding chapter.

### *D. Signs of Progressive Attainments in Religion*

(a) *High Views of God.*—Monarchy and the prophetic bands were conservative influences, but we have evidence, at first slight and afterwards strong, that religion was making positive advance. A fragment of an old poetical book, that of "Jashar," speaks of Jehovah in a way which separates Him utterly from other gods. The lines are put into the mouth of Solomon (1 Kings viii. 12) when he had consecrated the temple, and the cloud, perhaps a reminiscence of the thunder-cloud on which

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Jehovah rode, filled the building. The lines, which are in the sharpest contrast to the long Deuteronomic prayer which follows, breathe the spirit of antiquity, and may very well be as old as Solomon. They are these: “The sun did Jehovah set in the heavens: but He Himself hath chosen to dwell in darkness: surely I have built a house for Thine abode, a place for Thine eternal dwelling.” Jehovah dwells in the darkness of the “Debir,” or adytum, inscrutable and awful, but He is at the same time the God who has set the sun in the heavens. He is infinitely more than sun or the sun-god; and though we have not yet reached it, we are not far from the confession that He is the maker of heaven and earth.<sup>1</sup>

(β) *Power to assimilate Babylonian Legend and use it in the Service of Revelation.*—The purity and reasonableness of Hebrew

<sup>1</sup> Note, however, that the Deuteronomic prayer teaches, as Solomon’s prayer does not, God’s absolute omnipresence. “Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee: how much less this house” (1 Kings viii. 27). The text in viii. 12 has been emended from the LXX.

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religion enabled it to profit even by the mythological lore of Babylon and mould it till it became the channel of revelation. In Gen. vi., *seq.*, we have two Flood narratives welded together but easy to disentangle; each of them is derived from Babylon, though it is only the elder of the two—that of the Jahvist—which concerns us here. It offers a close and detailed resemblance to the Babylonian myth: the divine command to enter the ship or ark, the curious mention of the door being shut when the hero had entered, the seven days' rain, the episode of the dove and the raven, the hero's sacrifice when the earth was dry once more, the divine promise never to destroy mankind again, are features common to both. It is a matter of demonstration that the Babylonian myth is prior; to omit other reasons scarcely less cogent, a fragment of it has been discovered on a brick which dates from the reign of Hammurabi's fourth successor, *i.e.* 2245–2223 B.C., long before Moses on any theory existed. Yet how vast the difference

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in moral dignity, in elevation of ethical and religious thought! According to cuneiform record, "the gods were in consternation cowering like dogs"; Ishtar, "the lady of the gods," "cried like a woman in travail;" she reproaches Bel because when the gods intended to destroy one place only he had spread ruin over all mankind. Bel, in turn, is enraged with Ea, who had rescued the Babylonian Noah: the gods "gather like flies" over the sacrificer. The Hebrew writer holds that the all but universal penalty fell on all but universal sin, so that man's conscience recognises the justice of the sentence: he speaks of one God only, and this God is full of care for the righteous Noah and ready to pity the weakness of mankind. The bow in the heavens is the pledge of His grace, and the constant succession of the seasons proclaim the benignity of His rule. True, anthropomorphic traits occur once or twice in the Hebrew story. Still, if Jehovah repents of making man, He does not, like Bel, desire to destroy the innocent: if He

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“smells the sweet savour” of the sacrifice, the imagery is sober and restrained when set against the picture of gods who gather over it “like flies.” The difference between Babylonian and Hebrew religion stands out all the more clearly when we recognise the high literary merit of the Babylonian poem; for we feel that we have found a fair and equitable standard by which to measure the vast superiority of Hebrew religion.

(γ) *The Moral and Religious Influence of Elijah.*—Towards the middle of the ninth century B.C. Hebrew religion reaches its high-water mark in the prophet Elijah. And it is with some misgiving that we have placed him here instead of reserving the consideration of his work for the next chapter. In fact, he stood between two eras: that of the ancient Hebrews, and that of the literary prophets. His was a mighty personality, and we are justified, even apart from the authority of the gospel, in comparing it with that of Moses himself. He lived during the reign of Ahab (circ. 875–853), and his whole history is one of bitter conflict with the

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king. The strife hinged on Ahab's endeavour to introduce the worship of the Tyrian Baal into his realm. Now we are not to suppose that Ahab ever dreamed of renouncing his allegiance to Jehovah: much less did he tempt his subjects to do so. Far from that, he called his children, Athaliah (*i.e.* "Jehovah is exalted"), Ahaziah (*i.e.* "Jehovah is strong"), Jehoram (*i.e.* "Jehovah is high"). Nor is it credible that Jezebel, his queen, seriously set herself to exterminate Jehovah's prophets, and all but succeeded in her task. Ahab was surrounded by no less than four hundred prophets of Jehovah when he was starting on his last expedition, and all with one memorable exception were eager in his cause and enthusiastic in prediction of his success against the Aramæans. Moreover, the success of Jehu's revolution somewhat later proves that only a small number of Israelites had attached themselves to the service of the Baal: had the apostasy been general, how could Jehu have gathered "all the worshippers of Baal" in a single temple and then have cut them down with the help

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of eighty soldiers? Ahab's offence lay in his secular policy. He had concluded an alliance with Tyre, and sealed it by marrying the daughter of its king, Ittobaal: so he took it to be a natural thing that a temple of the Phœnician god should be erected in Samaria.

Elijah, on his part, would tolerate no such amalgamation. He was not, indeed, a monotheist even implicitly after the fashion of the literary prophets. Nor, again, do we hear that he made any protest against the prevalent worship of Jehovah under the form of an ox. But to him Jehovah was the sole God of Israel, and in the land of Israel He was either all or nothing: there was no room for compromise. He could not help interpreting the long drought which afflicted the land as a sign of Jehovah's wrath. He challenged the priests of the Baal to a trial of strength at Carmel where an altar of Jehovah had stood in former days, though Elijah had to rebuild it. They and he were to lay the carcase of a bullock on separate altars, leaving the wood unlit: each party was to invoke its deity, and the god who

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kindled the sacrifice with fire from heaven was to be accounted the victor. It was in vain that the priests of Baal uttered wild cries and hacked themselves with knives. No answer was vouchsafed to them ; but when they desisted in despair, fire from the sky consumed the sacrifice of Elijah. The fact of the drought at the time has independent attestation in Menander of Ephesus, who, though a late authority, seems to be drawing his information from an early source, and who certainly did not derive his report from the Old Testament, since he tells us that the drought lasted only one year, and was brought to an end by a procession of Phœnician priests. This is not the place to discuss the reality of the marvellous answer to Elijah's prayer. It came, if come it did, at a crisis in the history of religion, and the miracle was certainly opportune and appropriate.

In Elijah's eyes Jehovah and Baal represented two incompatible principles, viz. national righteousness, and sensuous nature-worship. Therefore as Elijah had withstood

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the worship of Baal, so in Jehovah's name he denounced Ahab for the judicial murder of Naboth (1 Kings xxi.). Naboth, probably on religious grounds, would not sell to the king his ancestral vineyard. He was condemned on a false charge of treason against the God and the King of Israel by the elders of his city, and the legal order observed may be taken as proof that Ahab was no oriental despot and that the authority of the city sheiks who had replaced those of the tribes could not be lightly set aside. Death was the penalty; and it fell, by the custom of the time, on Naboth's family as well as upon himself. There was a judgment, however, higher than that of the earthly court. In after days Jehu remembered how he had heard the divine sentence pronounced against the murderous king: "I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth and his sons—it is the oracle of Jehovah—and I will requite thee on this plat." The odium which this evil deed brought on Ahab, despite his undoubted patriotism, ability, and courage, bears striking witness to the sound moral sense which on

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the whole characterised the nation. It is really misleading to speak of Israel as at any time a monarchy on line with the ordinary autocracies of the East.

Chiefly the greatness of Elijah manifests itself in the loneliness of his position. He stood aloof, apparently, from the prophetic schools; for in the oldest and best accounts he stands alone “before the face” of his God, or at most with a single attendant. The “sons of the prophets” stirred the warlike spirit of the people: they were enthusiastic for Jehovah; but they were so, just because they were confident that Jehovah would in the last resort fight on their side and scatter their Aramaean foes. Elijah first ventured on the strange message that Jehovah wrought by national defeat no less than by national victory. He was able to believe (1 Kings xix. 15) that Hazael, the scourge of Israel, had been raised up by Jehovah. Here, as nowhere else, the thought of Elijah was original. He opened a new era in the religion of Israel.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LITERARY PROPHETS, DOWN TO THE DEUTERONOMIC REFORM

*Explanation of the Term.*—The title chosen for this chapter needs an apology. It would be a serious blunder to imagine that whereas Elijah and Elisha strove to influence the nation by the living word, Amos and Hosea introduced a new epoch, because they were the first to write down the lesson they had to teach, and appeal to a reading public. On the contrary, a line of prophets begins with Amos, who may be fitly called prophets of the word. Their predecessors were prophets of deed, men who took part in the politics of their time chiefly by their own acts and by the power their example had in stimulating others. Thus Elijah and Elisha were told by Jehovah in brief terms what

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they were to do: Amos and his followers were told what they had to say. The latter were far removed from our idea of literary men, who think as they write. Such a process would have been impossible to those who were moved in the very depth of their being by the divine word which they received straight from God, especially as writing was a much more difficult process then than it is now. We have an apt illustration of this in the biography of Jeremiah. For twenty-three years he prophesied without any care that his words should be committed to writing; and when he did, in obedience to the divine bidding, give them a more permanent form, he dictated them to Baruch, his amanuensis. We may suppose that the oracles repeated themselves in his own mind, and that as he spoke, Baruch wrote. It was always the spoken word which was inspired: writing down for the benefit of posterity was an after-thought which may have arisen in the minds of those who were the prophet's intimate disciples rather than in that of the prophet himself. Indeed, the notion of an

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inspired book is almost<sup>1</sup> foreign to the Old Testament authors. Generally speaking, a document had authority so far only as it was a faithful record of a revelation first orally delivered. By literary prophets, then, we understand simply those prophets whose words have come down to us in writing. To some extent the preservation of their words may be attributed to accident. Uriah, for example, prophesied in Jehovah's name in the same spirit and to the same effect as Jeremiah, whose contemporary he was: moreover, he sealed his testimony by a martyr's death. Nevertheless, all detailed memory of his utterances has perished. Plainly, therefore, we must seek for the characteristics of Amos and his successors elsewhere, *i.e.* outside the mere fact that their oracles were set down on tablets or on rolls of skin and papyrus.

<sup>1</sup> An exception should be made in favour of prophets like Ezekiel, who may be said to form a third class, "prophets of the pen." This will be explained farther on.

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## A. GENERAL ACCOUNT OF PROPHETIC TEACHING

(1) *The Wider Outlook of the Literary Prophets: Jehovah the God of the whole Earth.*—First, then, we may remark that the prophets with whom we are now concerned had a wider outlook than any which had been possible before. When they spoke, Israel had come into permanent relations with the great empires of Western Asia, Assyria, and Babylonia. At an earlier date war had raged for successive generations between the northern Hebrews and the Aramæans, better known to us as Syrians, whose capital was Damascus. This war had reached an acute stage under Ahab: soon a new dynasty arose under Jehu; but things grew worse instead of better, and in the time of Jehoahaz, his son, the nation was reduced to dire extremity. The tide turned under Joash, and Jeroboam II. had such brilliant success against the Aramæans that he was hailed, and very naturally, as the saviour of his country. Yet, behind the

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Aramæans stood the mighty empire of Assyria, and the temporary success of Israel was in reality the token of its own impending doom. When Jeroboam prevailed against his enemies at Damascus, the reason was that the Assyrian kings who had been for a time occupied elsewhere were now pressing hard on the capital of the Aramæans. In 732 Damascus fell: the buffer state interposed between Israel and Assyria had been swept away, and Israel's ruin could not be long delayed. The respite was brief, for Samaria followed the fate of Damascus in 721. For the first time in its history Israel was in the hands of a foe who left them without reasonable hope of escape. Amos, the earliest of the literary prophets, was not slow, even when all seemed well, to discern the signs of the times. Henceforth it became the business of the prophets to inculcate a new and absolute trust in Jehovah. If the Hebrews were to believe in Him at all, they must recognise Him as one who ruled the destinies of the whole world. Happily, Judah survived the northern kingdom, though

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only as a vassal state, first under an Assyrian and then under a Babylonian overlord. This was a matter of paramount importance for the religious interests of mankind. The prophetic teaching had time to gain wider and deeper influence, and to be consolidated in the Deuteronomic code. Otherwise to human view prophetic religion must have perished, and no Jewish Church could have arisen after the exile to replace the Jewish state.

(2) *They believed that the Bond between Jehovah and Israel was Moral not Natural, Jehovah being altogether Independent of Israel.*—Not, of course, that the thoughts of all men or even of all prophets were changed by the approach of disaster from Assyria and then from Babylon. Even in the closing scenes of Judah's history Jeremiah had to contend with rival prophets as well as with kings, nobles, and priests. Micah, an earlier prophet than he, describes the kind of seer who was in his day popular among the people. “If a prophet walking in wind and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy

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unto thee of wine and strong drink ; he shall even be the prophet of this people. . . . They bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace ; and whoso putteth not into their mouth, they even prepare war against him" (Micah ii. 11, iii. 5). Besides such men who foretold success and prosperity to promote their own selfish interests, there were many who no doubt sincerely believed that Jehovah must in the last resort save His people from destruction. As Israel was bound to Jehovah, so was Jehovah bound to Israel. The people needed help, and their God, so they thought, needed sacrifice and praise: His credit depended on national victory. In other words, the bond between God and the Hebrew kingdoms was natural. Amos, on the other hand, is first in a line of prophets who struck a higher note. They too believed that there was a bond between Israel and Jehovah. Only to them this bond was not natural, but moral and spiritual. If Israel was to be victorious through Jehovah his God, then he must do God's righteous will. The nation depended wholly upon Him, but He had

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no need of the nation. If Israel were gone, Jehovah would still abide, and would work out His unchangeable designs in the history of the world. The popular idea saw in the nation's defeat the defeat of Jehovah Himself. The best of the prophets looked deeper. They saw that the Assyrian and Babylonian hosts were not really arrayed in conflict with Jehovah. Rather, they were the ministers of His will, the instruments of His wrath when the cup of Israel's iniquity was full.

(3) *The Vocation of the Prophet.*—Thus the prophets became the heralds of coming woe. Therefore for them the question of questions was how that woe was to be averted. What was it that Jehovah required of Israel? The answer did not come through members of the prophetic guilds as such. No: Jehovah addressed the man who was to bear His message singly in the secret of his heart, and so sent him on his prophetic mission to Israel. Nor was it by any reasoning or reflection of his own that the prophet apprehended the divine will. He heard God's voice; his eyes opened to

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the heavenly vision, and he delivered the word given him to speak, against, it might be, his own inclinations, and at the cost of an agony which wrung his heart. “Jehovah hath spoken, who will not prophesy?” The prophet had to ignore his personal interests, and the reception he was likely to have. It was his to speak whether men would hear or whether they would forbear. He must not doubt the reality of the truth conveyed to him from above. Jehovah did nothing without revealing His counsel to His servants the prophets (Amos iii. 7). Consequently the prophets entered into the mind of Jehovah, and grasped the eternal laws. They traced the course of God’s dealings with His people in the long course of their history: they knew the inevitable results of national righteousness and national corruption. Their concern, however, was not primarily either with the past or the future. Chiefly, at least, they valued the past and the future because of the light which they cast upon present duty.

(4) *Prophetic Attitude to Popular Wor-*

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*ship.*—We have said that to the mass of Israelites the bond between Jehovah and His people was natural, and, had they been asked how this bond was to be maintained, they would certainly have replied, that sacrifice was the readiest and the chief means of securing the divine favour. Not that they would have ignored common morality or have affirmed that sacrifice was everything. They would, however, have assumed that it counted for much. The prophets on their part (and here let it be said, once for all, that we mean such prophets as were the organs of revealed truth) held that sacrifice was an affair of quite subordinate importance: unless accompanied by righteous action, it was worse than nothing. “I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer Me your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take away from Me the music of your songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment roll down

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like water, and equity like a perpetual stream" (Amos v. 21-24). "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice" (Hos. vi. 6). "Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth" (Isa. i. 14). This is the constant theme of prophets down to the exile. Even the second Isaiah is faithful to the principle that sacrifice has no power to please God, though apparently he allows it a certain symbolic value.

(5) *According to the Prophets, Jehovah demands National Righteousness. They were not Legalists.* — The real demand which Jehovah did make of His people was righteousness and purity of national life. He called for justice in the gates—*i.e.* in the courts of law—and He condemned that corrupt administration of the law which has always prevailed in the East. Hence the work of a genuine prophet was, as Jeremiah declares (xxiii. 21, *seq.*), to turn the wicked "from the evil of their doings." The prophets denounce murder, robbery, deceit, adultery, and the immoral worship in the high places. But it would be a signal error

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to suppose that they stopped short at gross and palpable offences. They make no appeal to written law, though there is reason to believe that before Hosea's time (Hos viii. 12) codes of civil and moral law had already been drawn up. They did not make any such appeal, because no code could be comprehensive or subtle enough to embrace all the sins which the prophets had in view. They make passionate protest against covetousness and greed, against usury, against luxurious living, against the way in which the rich took advantage of their poorer neighbours, buying up their farms, "joining field to field, till there was no room in the land." Their interest extends beyond their own land and nation; they believed that punishment would surely overtake an outrage on human feeling, though he who did and he who suffered the wrong were both foreigners (Amos ii. 1-3). Plainly no written law could tabulate all such offences, nor, if it could have done so, would that have been enough, for whereas law, so far at least as it imposes

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penalties, confines itself to regulating action, the prophets sought to inspire right desire from which good deeds flow. They had nothing but stern condemnation for trust in diplomacy and in strong armies, for self-righteousness, for the formalism with which men drew near to God with their lips, "while their heart was far from Him." In short, the religion of the prophets, as St. Paul saw, differs essentially from the religion of law. It lives and moves: it is continually rousing its disciples to fresh attention and fresh effort. The reason is that prophetic religion is no theocratic system settled once and for all. At each turning-point of national history God spoke through the men of His counsel, so that to hear and obey is the sum of all moral and religious duty. The hearer needs the attentive ear and willing heart, else he will not understand. The prophet himself must undergo a process of moral purification before he can enter with reverent sympathy into that mind of God which he interprets to others. That is why

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Isaiah's lips are cleansed with a burning coal from the heavenly altar. The requisite discipline might involve bitter experience. Not without long and sore struggle did Jeremiah gain the victory over self and become the plastic organ of Jehovah's will. "If thou return, then will I bring thee again, that thou mayest stand before Me; and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth: they shall return unto thee, but thou shalt not return unto them. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall; and they shall fight against thee, but not prevail against thee: for I am with thee."

(6) *Prophetic View of Jehovah's Nature.* — Such ideas of God's commands lead directly to new conceptions of the divine nature. The prophets built, it is true, on the old foundations. The God whom they proclaimed was the same God who had redeemed Israel from Egyptian bondage, and had guided it ever since. The corruptions which the prophets denounced were due to Canaanite contamination, and formed

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no part of the revelation vouchsafed to Moses. Since that time Nazirites and prophets of the older type, notably Elijah, had prepared the way for the teaching of Amos and his successors. All this, however, is compatible with the fact that a great advance in religion was made when Israel came face to face with Assyria. Even when the prophets use old and familiar words, they fill them with a new content. They take no scrupulous care to avoid so-called anthropomorphism: they do not hesitate to use the old language about Jehovah's eyes, His uplifted hand, His arm that "is stretched out still." To them, however, such phrases are symbolic and nothing more. They pour scorn on the oxen worshipped at Bethel and Dan as childish attempts to bring God down in the sphere of that which is transitory and material. The idols are "elilim," *i.e.* not gods.<sup>1</sup> "The Egyptians," says Isaiah (xxxii.

<sup>1</sup> The derivation of the word is very doubtful: "weaklings" may be the primary meaning, but the sense given in the text was probably suggested from early times by a sort of play upon the word.

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3), “are men, and not God ; and their horses flesh, and not spirit : and when Jehovah shall stretch out His hand, both he that helpeth shall stumble, and he that is holpen shall fall, and they all shall fall together.” He seems to mean that Jehovah and His plans exhaust the spiritual element in the world : He alone is God and Spirit ; all else is relegated to the category of man or flesh. Against this spiritual power nothing can stand. Jehovah is absolutely righteous, and as such He is consistent with Himself, so that He cannot be turned aside by weakness and passion, like those of a human being. “I am God, and not man ; the Holy One in the midst of thee” (Hos. xi. 9). As a righteous God He punishes deeds of sanguinary violence, such as those of Jehu against the house of Ahab, though at an earlier period even so great a religious leader as Elijah was believed to have foreseen the massacre without protest, and probably with tacit approval. The God of the prophets, therefore, was a Being on whom man could rely : His righteousness

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displays itself in faithfulness and truth, in the constant love which impels Him to plead with His people, in the mercy and grace which delights to pardon them when they repent from the heart. This advance of thought is especially striking when we consider the prophetic use of the word "holy." It had been familiar to the Hebrews from time immemorial, and something has been said about its original force in a previous chapter. Applied to things it meant consecrated, set apart from common use, "taboo." As an attribute of Jehovah it signified the difficulty and danger of approaching Him save with due ritual precautions. None might see Him and live: even His nearer presence was perilous save to those who were ritually pure and acquainted with the etiquette of worship. To the prophets Jehovah is holy, because He hates and punishes sin. Isaiah thought he was undone when he saw "the King, the Lord of Hosts," and heard the seraphim crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy." The reason of his fear was rational and religious:

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“I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips.” In the same spirit Habakkuk affirms that God’s eyes are “too pure to look upon iniquity”; and before Habakkuk, Hosea had insisted that Jehovah, despite the love which He bears to Israel, cannot overlook Israel’s infidelity, because He is “the Holy One in the midst of them.”

To the prophets, as has been already implied, Jehovah is the God of the whole earth: He is not merely a tribal or national deity. He appoints the doom of foreign nations. His glory fills the earth, and the invincible Assyrian is but “the rod of His anger” (Isa. x. 5, *seq.*). The mightiest forces arrayed against Him are scattered like chaff before the wind, and vanish like a dream in the night. Men dominated by such a view did in effect acknowledge Jehovah to be the only God. For a considerable time this belief was not expressed in dogmatic form. It is only, or at least chiefly, from the latter half of the seventh century that it is put in clear and concise words. No doubt

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it would be easy to produce passage after passage from the second Isaiah containing definite and explicit statements of the divine unity. We cannot, however, match them with assertions of monotheism equally clear and pronounced from Amos or Hosea. The apparent exceptions to the rule really strengthen it, for such expressions of formal monotheism as do actually occur in our existing texts of the earlier prophets will not stand the test of examination: most of them are conventional and commonplace in style, and the continuity of sense gains rather than loses by their excision. Nevertheless, if the prophets from Amos onwards abstained for a time from formulating any monotheistic creed, they were in the truest and deepest sense monotheists. They had a profound and passionate conviction that Jehovah the righteous and holy God, whom all things serve, differed from all other gods, not in degree only, but in kind. The Canaanite Baals, Bel or Nebo of the Assyrians, fell away into mere nothingness before a faith like

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that of the prophets. This is a striking and unique phenomenon in the whole history of religion, and it is a matter of supreme moment to mark the steps by which the prophets rose to this exalted faith. Their religion was not developed from the confidence of the early Hebrews that their national God was stronger than those of their neighbours. There can be no germ of unique progress in a state of feeling common to nations all the world over. Again the prophets did not rise by the contemplation of nature or by the philosophic instinct for ultimate unity, the desire to posit one first principle from which all things are derived. In some such way as this Greek sages were led to believe in one first cause, or in one unchanging substance which underlies the perpetual change on the surface and assumes an infinite variety of form. Consequently as the Greek notion of the gods became purified and heightened, it forfeited its power over the hearts of ordinary men. It tended to become a mere abstraction, little able to touch the conscience or

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mould the life: it could not inspire new hope or trust, or unite the simple and the learned in the communion of a church. It left the ignorant to find their comfort in superstition which was often immoral and degrading. The prophets followed a very different path. Instead of setting out from the unity of God, they began by preaching His character. They came to grasp the great truth of the divine unity, because they saw in God the fountain-head of all that was righteous and holy. Here, too, they rested on no speculation of their own. God spoke directly, and with ever-increasing clearness and fulness, to a long line of prophets. They knew Him not as an arbitrary and capricious being on whose action no man could calculate, but as the righteous ruler and judge of all, who enabled His chosen servants to enter into His secret plans and impart them to Israel. He was not only a holy God, but also a God who demanded holiness from His people, and was constantly enforcing and expanding this demand. The god of Greek philosophy is purer, but also

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far less real than the deities of the Homeric poems. But the God of the prophets is infinitely more real and living than the god whom their fathers had worshipped at Bethel and Dan and many another local shrine. The God of the prophets is personal: He is the leader and the judge, the father and Saviour of Israel. Thus prophetic religion finds its fulfilment in the Incarnation: it never could have developed into pantheism like the religious systems of Egypt or Greece.

### **B. THE PROPHETS INDIVIDUALLY**

This must suffice as a general description of prophetic teaching. We may turn for a little to the individual prophets and their several contributions to religion. We shall find abundant evidence of progress which was continuous. This must not be taken to mean that new truth can be clearly discovered in every prophet whose works have come down to us: it can, however, be shown that the prophetic outlook widened with the years; that prophet after prophet

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held faithfully to the truth which he had inherited and listened with open ear for the revelation which was to supplement it.

(1) *Amos*.—Amos, who lived and taught about 750 B.C., is the first prophet who has transmitted to us the record of his words. He was a herdsman of Tekoah in Judah, south of Bethlehem, and on the border of the wilderness which lies between the highlands of Judah and the Dead Sea. His occupation put him at no disadvantage from a literary point of view, for as yet few if any books had been written, and hence there was no wall of separation between the educated and uneducated classes, and the purity of his speech, the simplicity and directness of his style, show that he had gained rather than lost by his country life and homely occupation. He does not mention the Assyrians by name, but it is clear that he had them in his mind. At last the voice within assured him that Jehovah had decreed the destruction of His people, and possessed by this new truth he wended his way northwards, and delivered his tidings of woe at

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the royal sanctuary of Bethel. The chief priest then bade him go back to Judah, and make his living there like others who were prophets by profession. To this Amos replied that he was no “son of a prophet” (*i.e.* no member of a prophetic guild), and that he followed no fancy of his own. “Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy against My people Israel.” It was not at all a new thing for a prophet to rebuke wickedness in king or people. Who could do that more boldly than Elijah? It was a new thing to declare that Israel would perish in captivity, and that Jehovah instead of defending His people would Himself execute the sentence upon them.<sup>1</sup>

The people took for granted that Jehovah cared for Israel only: to Amos He is, in effect, the God of the whole universe. He had bestowed benefits on other nations: if He had led the Israelites up from Egypt, He had likewise brought the Philistines from Caphtor and the Aramaeans from Kir (ix. 7).

<sup>1</sup> Elijah's message of woe, even as we have it, stops short of this.

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He hates iniquity wherever He despises it, and punishes it wherever it may be found. He threatens Moab with vengeance for an inhuman deed with which Israel had nothing to do, viz. for burning “the bones of the King of Edom into lime” (ii. 1-3). He is to bring a curse on Tyre, because it has violated “the covenant of brethren” (i. 9-10). We might almost think that Amos had abandoned all belief in the special privileges of Israel, and that his religion had become purely universalist and humanitarian. That, however, was far from being the case, and in one pregnant sentence he sums up his view of Jehovah’s relation to Israel. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore upon you first I will visit all your iniquities” (iii. 2). Amos confesses that Jehovah has raised Israel high above other nations: He has acknowledged it in a way which is quite exceptional, and has entered into solemn covenant with it. So far he is at one with the mass of his countrymen: nay, the heathen would have said much the same of their tutelary divinities. But

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Amos, unlike ordinary Hebrews and heathen, bases this pre-eminence of Israel on moral and religious grounds, which, just because they are moral and religious, are also profoundly rational. God has exhibited His favour to Israel in this, that from age to age He has habitually revealed His will through the prophets of Israel (iii. 7). “I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazirites. . . . But ye gave the Nazirites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not” (ii. 11, 12). Such is the privilege of Israel; and privilege in the mind of Amos, who diverges here further still from the popular and natural belief, implies responsibility. The greater Israel’s opportunities of knowing God’s will, the more awful the visitation, should that will remain undone. Now, the one and sole means of fulfilling that will is national righteousness. Jehovah is the personal righteousness, and, so clearly does Amos see this, that he counts it all one to say, “Seek Jehovah, that ye may live” (v. 6), and, “Seek good, and not evil, that ye may

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live" (v. 14). Sacrifice is not, as the people idly dream, the condition of acceptance with God, nor is any ritual the way to secure His grace. It is not sacrifice but righteousness which pleases Him. For this He has pleaded long but in vain, and therefore "the day of Jehovah" is at hand. The people would have welcomed that day: they understood by it a day of battle in which Jehovah led Israel's hosts to victory. Amos, on the contrary, saw that the day of Jehovah, soon to come, would be a day of darkness, not of light (v. 18, *seq.*), a day on which Jehovah would carry out His holy and immutable resolve to punish Israel's iniquity. Already, in his vision, the prophet beholds the life of Israel brought to an utter end, and he chants the dirge for his nation's fall. "The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall not rise: she is cast down upon her land; there is none to raise her up." To most of his audience such words must have sounded like gross blasphemy. How could Jehovah abandon His people? How could He uphold His honour when Israel

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was gone? Was He so weak that He must, as a matter of course, fail before the Assyrian armies and the Assyrian gods? These obvious objections had for Amos no validity whatsoever. He saw in Israel's ruin not the defeat but the triumph of the righteous God. It was not Assyria but God using Assyria as His instrument who was about to destroy Israel. "I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel" (vi. 14). "I will cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith Jehovah, whose name is the God of hosts" (v. 27). Jehovah is the invisible power, and it is He who does really what Assyria seems to do. If Israel perish, He still abides the personal and imperishable righteousness. We are reminded of the Baptist's words, uttered many centuries later: "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham for our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Matt. iii. 9). Nor must it be forgotten that when Amos spoke, Israel seemed at the height of its prosperity. He

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visited Northern Israel as the long and glorious reign of Jeroboam II., who won back the ancient territory of Israel, was drawing to its close. It was, as we may easily learn from Amos himself, a time of luxury and refinement and careless ease. There was, so far as we know, no intrusion of alien religion, and evidently the people were eager to make acknowledgment for their victories over Aram by ample sacrifice.

(2) *Hosea*.—It is surprising that Amos, who saw visions and heard God's call, should exhibit little or nothing of the mystical spirit. Yet so it is. He asks for righteousness and nothing more. He enters into minute detail on the abuses of daily life, and states in the plainest terms the kind of reformation which Jehovah prescribes under pain of national ruin. Hosea's disposition was of another sort; and it was developed by a tragic experience. He had married a wife who proved unfaithful and bore children that were not his. As he looked back he beheld the hand of God in the choice of a wife which he had made. He felt as if

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God had actually commanded him to wed a woman who was to bring sorrow and shame upon him. His own love was the reflection of Jehovah's love for Israel; his own pain helped him to understand Jehovah's indignation with idolatrous Israel. Thus he reached a religion more intense than that of Amos. Jehovah was not merely the master of Israel, demanding obedience to just and equitable commands. He was Israel's husband (ii. 2), or, by a changed metaphor, Israel was His child, the object of His affection from the beginning of the national history. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. . . . I taught Ephraim to go; I took them on my arms: . . . I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love" (xi. 1, *seq.*). Nevertheless, love, if it be true, has its sterner side. For a time the prophet's relation with his wife was suspended, and he subjected her to a severe discipline. Jehovah would not be less inexorable to Israel. "The children of Israel shall abide many days without king and

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without prince, without sacrifice and without pillar, and without ephod or teraphim" (iii. 4). "Because of the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of My house" (*i.e.* out of Canaan) (ix. 15). He summons the powers of darkness to pour out their fury on His people. "Shall I free them from the hand of Sheol; redeem them from death? [No, indeed.] Where are thy plagues, O death? thy pestilence, O Sheol? Repentance is hid from mine eyes" (xiii. 14). The picture of divine fury is drawn with appalling, sometimes, we may be tempted to think, with revolting energy. Yet, at this point more distinctly than elsewhere, Hosea transcends Amos, for Jehovah punishes in love. "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart" (ii. 14). "O Israel, return unto Jehovah thy God" (xiv. 1). Hosea had exalted ideas of marriage. A wife to him was no purchased chattel, and marriage was a communion in enduring love, not a bond which might be broken at any moment by divorce. Hosea imprisoned and afflicted his

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wife that she might be fitted to become his wife once more, and his inalienable affection taught him that Jehovah's love was stronger than His people's sin.

Again and again Hosea dwells on the knowledge of God, as the one thing needful. He complains (iv. 1) that there is no "knowledge of God in the land"; that the people are perishing for lack of it (iv. 6); that Israel's claim to know God (viii. 2) is idle. To know Jehovah is to know His "loving-kindness" to Israel, and to know also that it is loving-kindness, between man and man, not sacrifice which he seeks at Israel's hands (vi. 6). Jehovah hates cruel deeds, though done in His name and for His cause, and therefore will avenge the blood shed by Jehu, the champion of Jehovah (i. 4). Hosea does not, like Amos, enter into the details of morality. He goes back to the principles and dispositions which really determine both religion and morality. In this respect, and in the place he gives to loving-kindness, which Amos does not mention, in the intimacy comparable to that of

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marriage which he attributes to the relationship between Jehovah and Israel; lastly, in his belief that God punishes Israel in mercy and even in its degradation will not abandon it utterly and for ever, Hosea is more spiritual, more religious, nearer Christianity, in short, than his predecessor.

While, however, Hosea speaks less explicitly than Amos on the moral offences of the nation, he has much to say on the corruption of national life. He traces this corruption to three sources. First, the popular worship which the priests encourage is, in his eyes, no better than sin. The priests, he says (iv. 8), "feed on the sin of my people, and set their heart on their iniquity." The more sacrifice, the more sin (viii. 11). Unlike Amos, he denounces all use of images; they are man's work (viii. 6): the oxen which passed for the images of Jehovah are mere Baals (xi. 2), and he derides (xiii. 2) the men who "kiss the calves." He treats the whole ritual in the high places as adultery, a word suggested by his view of Jehovah as the husband of Israel.

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Next he is out of sympathy with the civil constitution of the nation and, in particular, with the royal power. He had been shocked by the impotent violence of the mushroom dynasties which had replaced each other, with kings who were simply revolutionary leaders bound to glut the greed and vengeance of their partisans. "The days of Gibeah," where Saul had held his simple court, were the beginning of Israel's fall (ix. 9; x. 9). Kings and the revolutions which swept them away were bad alike: "I have given them a king in My anger, and taken him away in My wrath" (xiii. 11).

Lastly, Hosea was opposed on religious ground to foreign alliance, which he stigmatises as adultery (viii. 9), the same reproach which he had applied to the popular cult. Worldly diplomacy of this kind was foolish, and made Israel the prey of its foes (vii. 11, *seq.*), and it was false and treacherous besides (x. 4, *seq.*): Jehovah, the husband of Israel, will tolerate no rival: He alone is the saviour of His people. Here,

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and in his dissatisfaction with the institution of the kingdom, we have the first germ of that theocratic ideal which became so prominent afterwards.

(3) *Isaiah*.—Isaiah, whose prophetic work extended from 740 to 701 B.C., gathers into more perfect form the truths which Amos and Hosea had proclaimed. Like them he loathes the corruption of justice and the oppression of the poor which disgraced the land in which he lived. “Hear the word of Jehovah, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear to the teaching of your God, ye people of Gomorrah” (i. 10); “How is the faithful city become an harlot! righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers” (i. 21); “What mean ye that ye grind the face of the poor? saith Jehovah” (iii. 15). He denounces the luxury of women (iii. 16, *seq.*) and the selfishness of rich land-owners who bought up the property of the poor (v. 8). He has the same scorn for false worship and for the delusion that any worship can earn God’s favour for sinners. “The land is full of

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idols ; they worship the work of their own hands" (ii. 8). "Ye shall be ashamed of the terebinths which ye have desired, and confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen," as objects of worship (i. 29). "When ye make many prayers, I will not hear : your hands are full of blood. . . . Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah : though your sins be as scarlet, shall they be white as snow ? Though they be red as crimson, shall they be as wool ? If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the fruit of the land : but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be made to eat the sword." And he leaves no doubt about the obedience God requires. "Cease to do evil : learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" (i. 17, *seq.*). He retains the tender pathos of Hosea, but subdued and chastened. "Children have I made great and tall : but they have rebelled against me" (i. 2). The relations of Israel to Jehovah are set forth in the parable of the vineyard, an exquisite production of which any literature might well be proud.

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Further, Isaiah, like Amos and Hosea, may be fitly described as a prophet of woe, though this statement, as we shall see presently, needs modification. By increasing their responsibility his words were to harden the hearts of those they were meant to heal. The people were to reject with scorn the prophetic word as if it had been only fit for children. Thereupon Jehovah was to speak with a voice they needs must hear; He was to speak through the foreign tongue of the Assyrian victor (xxviii. 11, *seq.*). Judah was to be broken in pieces like a potter's vessel (xxx. 14). Calamity was to follow calamity, "till the land became utterly waste": even if a tenth survived, that, too, must perish (xi. 11, *seq.*).<sup>1</sup> Jehovah was to undertake a strange work (xxviii. 21), strange, indeed, for He was to lead the Assyrian hosts against His own people (v. 26). He was to press forward the siege of His own city, Jerusalem, and bring it down to the ground (xxix.).

So far Isaiah stood where Amos and Hosea

<sup>1</sup> The last three words are a late gloss absent in the LXX.

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had stood before him, and he built on the foundation of their teaching. Yet his position and his outlook parted him from them: he saw farther and with greater clearness than they. They played no part in political life: Isaiah throughout his long career was an acknowledged power at the court of Jerusalem. Almost at the outset he appears as the counsellor of Ahaz, who treats him with marked respect and differs from him with misgiving (vii.). His opponents at a later time were fain to hide their counsel from [the prophet of] Jehovah (xxix. 15) and to plot in secret. He boldly arraigned Shebna, a foreigner who had become Hezekiah's major-domo (xxii. 15, *seq.*). Amos and Hosea had announced the word of Jehovah in the northern kingdom, and accepted the impending fall of Samaria as the end of the nation's life. Isaiah, who lived in a kingdom which was better ordered because of its genuine and enduring fidelity to the house of David, beheld the fall of Samaria without dismay, looking upon it as the beginning and not the end of divine judgment. When the

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crash of the northern kingdom came, he had still a score of energetic years before him. Amidst many outward changes Isaiah urged one consistent policy. When he was consecrated for the prophetic office Tiglath Pileser II., the aggressive king of Assyria, had been reigning for five years, and in 735 northern Israel and Aram marched upon Judah, probably with the design of forcing it into a coalition against the great Assyrian empire. When the hearts of the men of Judah shook as the leaves of the forest shake before the wind, Isaiah was steadfast and fearless. He had nothing but scorn for "those two tails of smoking firebrands," those two sovereigns of petty kingdoms already wasted by the devouring might of Assyria. There was no need to fear them: any marriageable girl soon to be a mother might call her first-born "Immanuel" ("God is with us"), because God would speedily free Judah from the panic caused by Israel and Aram. "Before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be

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forsaken." Only the prophet warned Ahaz against seeking help from Tiglath Pileser. To do so was to court his own destruction: it was to escape from the nerveless hands of Aram and Israel and to fall into the strong grip of the Assyrian king. Ahaz disobeyed: Judah became a vassal kingdom, and Isaiah, now that Judah's bond with Assyria was an accomplished fact, counselled submission to the Assyrian power. For thirty years the land enjoyed rest and peace, and was able to give itself to its true function of moral and religious reform. Samaria fell in 721, but Judah enjoyed quiet and happiness. In 705 a change came: Sargon, the strong king of Assyria, was murdered: Merodach-Beladan of Babylon rebelled: Hezekiah thought the moment opportune for asserting his independence, and joined a league of small states which had the same end in view. All this treachery and intrigue, the drunken folly which would take no warning from the fate of Samaria, the delusive belief that Egypt would help Judah against its overlord, was hateful to Isaiah. Soon

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the blow fell which Isaiah foresaw. In 701 Sennacherib wasted and plundered Judah. Nevertheless, some calamity, the nature of which cannot now be exactly known, drove Sennacherib home again from the borders of Judah, and Jerusalem was saved. A mocking song ascribed (xxxvii. 21, *seq.*) to Isaiah himself speaks of Jehovah as putting "His hook" in Sennacherib's nose and "His bridle in his lips," and turning him back by the way he came. If Isaiah really said this, we must allow for considerable change of view since he threatened (xxix. 1, *seq.*) Jerusalem itself with the extremity of siege. But this would not seriously diminish the general consistency of his principles.

The course which Isaiah supported was sound and wise. Judah lay apart from the high-road between Egypt and Assyria, and its best chance consisted in holding quite aloof from the politics of Western Asia. Isaiah, however, spoke in the spirit of prophecy, not of state-craft. He strove to impress upon his countrymen the great lesson that Jehovah alone is to be feared. When

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the day of Jehovah, the day of which Amos had spoken, came, then Jehovah alone would be exalted and He would “arise to shake mightily the earth” (ii. 19). Egypt and its horsemen were powerless before Him (xxxi. 3); Assyria was but the instrument in His hands, “the rod of His anger” (x. 5). But Jehovah, as Isaiah conceives of Him, is not an oriental despot or a magnified Israel: He is “the holy one of Israel,” the God that rewards righteousness and punishes wickedness. It is He who, through His prophet, leads His people by gentle and peaceable ways like “the waters of Shiloah that go softly” (viii. 6), and because they refuse, He brings upon them the overflowing flood of the Assyrian army. In one memorable<sup>1</sup> word first found in him Isaiah describes the true relation of man to God, and that word has had a long history in the Jewish and much more in the Christian Church. He calls upon man to “believe in” God, *i.e.* to

<sup>1</sup> The same root which Isaiah uses for the act of faith has been kept in the Syriac New Testament and also in the Koran, though in the latter its religious worth is greatly lowered.

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trust His righteousness and His power, to rely on His sure word, to trust Him alone. "If ye will not believe, ye shall not be established," or if a clumsy attempt to bring out the exact force of the Hebrew expression may be excused, "If ye do not make sure, ye shall not be made sure" (vii. 9). "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone, a stone well proved: he that believeth shall not waver" (xxviii. 16). The foundation stone is Jehovah's relation to His people: on which, though it be invisible, their stability depends.

Hope springs from faith, and so Isaiah believed that a new and better order would grow from the ruins of the old. He cherished this expectation from the first, for, when he met Ahaz in 734, he was accompanied by a son called Shear Yashub, *i.e.* "a remnant shall return." Here, again, we have a fruitful idea which reappears, no doubt, with essential modification, in St. Paul's conception of a spiritual Israel. Israel restored is still a nation with its old institutions, only its sin is purged and it has ideal rulers. "I will restore thy judges as at

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the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.” This being his expectation, no reason forbids us to believe that Isaiah pictured his ideal state as subject to an ideal king, or, as we are accustomed to say, a Messiah. Such pictures we have in ix. 1–6 and in xi. Distinguished scholars refuse to admit that these passages are from Isaiah’s hand. True, the passages in question assume that the royal line of David, though it still exists, has been humbled and cut down, so that a shoot has to rise from the mere stock of what was once a noble tree. This, however, was a natural expectation, if, as Isaiah believed, Judah was to be wasted, Jerusalem taken, and the former things swept away. It is more than natural if Isaiah lived, as he may well have done, into Manasseh’s reign. As men gird themselves for their work, so will this ideal king gird himself with righteousness: he will judge according to the truth: he will defend the cause of the poor. As a “wonderful counsellor” he will form his plans, carry

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them out as a “divine hero” or conqueror, he will divide the booty<sup>1</sup> and bring in lasting peace. Meanwhile, till that golden age arrives, Isaiah has his work to do, and here also his thought is marked by decided originality. He is to reach the nation through a band of disciples whom he trains as the guardians of their master’s teaching. They are the means by which the restoration is to be effected, and the germ set in the soil which developed into the church within the state. “Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples. And I will wait on Jehovah, that hideth His face from the house of Jacob; I will wait for Him” (viii. 16, 17).

(4) *Micah*.—Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, who lived in the country, contributes no new element to prophetic thought. Very little of his work is left. But we may conclude this survey with a passage which goes by Micah’s name—though either it is not his, or, if it be his, is later than the rest

<sup>1</sup> This is the probable meaning of the third name given to the king, but it is far from certain.

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of his work. It dates, apparently, from the reign of Manasseh, and is an admirable summary of prophetic religion from the ethical side. The people are driven to despair: they are bowed down under a religion of terror: they are ready to offer any price for their redemption. “Where-with shall I come before Jehovah, or bow myself down before the most high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” Then comes the divine reply. “He hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (vi. 6-8).

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PROPHETIC REFORM. THE DECALOGUE. DEUTERONOMY AND JEREMIAH

*The Fulfilment of Previous Prophecy and the Reaction under Manasseh.*—In the last days of Isaiah, and in the eighty years or more which followed his death, two forces, one friendly, the other hostile to prophetic religion, may be clearly discerned. At first it seemed as if the cause for which Isaiah fought was destined to triumph speedily. The high places throughout the land with their dangerous resemblance to Baal worship had been discredited, and some of them must have fallen into Assyrian hands. The heavy blows which the prophet foretold had fallen. By the capture of Samaria the northern kingdom had ceased to be, and Judah had been devastated. So far the expectation of the prophet had been fulfilled in the most brilliant manner, for the doom pronounced

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by him had been almost accomplished. Yet Judah still survived, and the hope of better things remained. The city of David had been rescued from the foe, the time for repentance had not passed away, and the pious Israelite might still rejoice in the God who had His “fire in Zion, His furnace in Jerusalem.” Moreover, the success of the prophetic party had some practical result, for Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii. 4) destroyed at least the serpent worship which disgraced the temple. When, however, Hezekiah died and the long reign of Manasseh began, a very different policy came into operation. Once more Judah was a vassal kingdom under Assyria. Idolatrous worship was again admitted within the temple (Jer. vii. 30). The Sun-God had his horses and his chariot there (2 Kings xxiii. 11), and adoration was paid after the Assyrian fashion to the whole host of heaven under Istar or Venus their queen.<sup>1</sup> One rite of a character

<sup>1</sup> There is considerable doubt of the Hebrew word here translated “queen.” It may mean no more than “operation,” and be an equivalent to “host.”

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peculiarly revolting had a strange fascination for the people of Judah under Manasseh: this was the sacrifice of children in the valley of Tophet. The origin of this custom is shrouded in mystery. We are told that the children were offered to Molech, being first slain with the knife and then burned. But we do not know anything of Molech, except that the name is miswritten. If we suppose that Molech, or Melech, was a Canaanite or Phœnician deity, then we have no explanation for the undoubted fact that the usage first became popular in the Assyrian period. If we take Melech (*i.e.* “king”) for a mere title of Jehovah, we have the same difficulty, with the additional one that no reason can be seen why the title “Melech” should always be used in connection with the sacrifice of children. On the other hand, no such practice has as yet been traced among the Assyrians. We can only say that in the Assyrian period, when the political and social horizon was dark and threatening, men found no sacrifice too costly as the price of their deliverance, a view which be-

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trays itself clearly enough in the prophetic poem quoted at the end of the last section. After a time it came to be thought that Jehovah Himself was appeased by this ghastly rite, a delusion against which Jeremiah (vii. 31, xxxii. 35) indignantly protests, while Ezekiel (xx. 25), placing himself at the people's standpoint, admits that Jehovah, in His anger with the disobedience of His people, had given them "statutes which were not good" and "polluted them in their own gifts." Manasseh threw himself zealously into this mixture of Jehovah worship with heathenism, and it seemed as if the higher religion was in danger of perishing.

### EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN REVEALED RELIGION

(1) *The Decalogue*.—Of course the king was not suffered to take his own way unopposed. The prophetic religion had many martyrs, and the sword devoured the prophets "like a destroying lion" (Jer. ii. 30). Besides, Manasseh was evidently a cruel and un-

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scrupulous ruler, quite apart from his religious bigotry. A reaction was sure to follow, and the grossness of the religious corruption, no doubt, intensified the zeal of the prophetic school for that purity of religious service which had lain so near Isaiah's heart. We have said something already of a decalogue chiefly ritual, which is pre-prophetic. We may, perhaps, place in Manasseh's reign, a decalogue with which we are all far more familiar, and which is chiefly moral. We possess this latter decalogue in two recensions, one recension being that of Exod. xx., another that of Deut. vi. These vary greatly in the reasons appended for the observance of Sabbath, and also in the wording of the commandment against covetousness, a commandment which enters into some detail. From this double form we may reasonably infer that, in its original shape, this decalogue was composed of ten concise sentences arranged in two pentads, one enforcing the reverence due to Jehovah and to parents who stand in Jehovah's place, the other, the duties which we owe to our

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fellowmen. The text may be restored thus

—1. Thou shalt have no other gods but one. 2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. 3. Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God for a vain end (*i.e.* perhaps for purposes of sorcery). 4. Remember the Sabbath day to hallow it. 5. Honour thy father and thy mother. 6. Thou shalt not kill. 7. Thou shalt not commit adultery. 8. Thou shalt not steal. 9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. 10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house. Even in this reduced form the decalogue must be the result of prophetic teaching. Like Hosea and Isaiah, but unlike Elijah, it prohibits images: by a refinement of thought which must have been slowly evolved, it forbids the covetous thought as well as the unjust deed: above all, it is almost exclusively ethical: the Sabbath is the only positive institution which it mentions, and that is from the moral point of view a singularly beneficent one. Of course when we suggest the reign of Manasseh as a possible date, we refer to

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the composition as a whole. Some of the precepts—*e.g.* the prohibition of murder, theft, and adultery—must have descended from a prehistoric antiquity.

The decalogue is valuable for what it leaves unsaid as well as for what it says: it is valuable also because of its directness and simplicity, while at the same time it admits of wide application, and may, without any violence, receive a spiritual interpretation which satisfies the Christian ideal.

(2) *The Promulgation of Deuteronomy.*—But under Josiah changes occurred which were on a larger scale and, for the time at least, had more striking consequences. Josiah was a king altogether different from Ammon his father, or Manasseh his grandfather. Some impression may have been made upon him and his people by the events of the year 630. The Scythian hordes dealt the first severe blow to the Assyrian empire, which lost its provinces and not long after tottered to its fall. Jeremiah and Zephaniah raised their voices in warning, and when, in 626, the Scythians, bound for

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Egypt, passed Judah by, its inhabitants may well have felt that they should take warning, and repent before it was too late. In 621 Hilkiah, the chief priest at Jerusalem, sent to Josiah "the book of the teaching," which he had found in the temple. That book is known to us as Deuteronomy, though the roll at first contained only the kernel of our present book, viz. the legislative part from chap. xii. to chap. xxvi., and even there certain portions have been added to the primary text. It certainly claimed to be Mosaic: so much the place of legislation implies. The writer speaks in the person of Moses, believing, and rightly, that he wrote in Moses' spirit and built on his foundation. There is no question of pious fraud: it may have been written by a faithful Israelite in the gloomy days of Manasseh with the hope that it would do its work when the tyranny was overpast. In the end a man was found to carry out the programme of the new law. The whole of Josiah's reform is based on principles clearly stated in Deuteronomy for the first time.

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We may add that the language and style of the book presents marked similarities to the vocabulary and style of Jeremiah, who began his ministry in the same reign.

In many respects Deuteronomy stands at the parting of the ways: it is at once a noble monument of prophetic teaching and the introduction to a new order in which prophecy was to fade away and give place to the dominant influence of written law. It is very unlike a code, for it recurs again and again to the great principles of religion, and dwells especially on the love of Jehovah as including all duty. “Ye shall walk after Jehovah your God, and fear Him, and keep His commandments, and obey His voice, and ye shall serve Him, and cleave unto Him” (xiii. 4). Jehovah will enlarge Israel’s borders, if the people “love Jehovah [their] God, and walk in His ways.” The amplifications which the text received at an early date are mostly written in a hortatory style, and they have caught the spirit of the original book. Jehovah is the God who stands alone, and therefore Israel is to worship

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Him with the entire devotion of heart and mind, to love Him with intense and undivided affection (vi. 4, 5). In one passage the question and the answer of Micah vi. 6-8 are virtually repeated. "And now Israel, what doth Jehovah thy God require of thee, but to fear Jehovah thy God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, and to serve Jehovah thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul?" (x. 12, 13). This is just what the prophets said, neither more nor less. Observe, however, that the Deuteronomist does not stop here: he adds that Israel must also "keep the commandments of the Lord, and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good." At this point the author passes from prophecy to statute. He desires to protect the people from apostasy by external rules easily apprehended.

The rule which he sets first, and to which he attaches the utmost importance, is the absolute prohibition of all sacrifice save at the one altar, "at the place which Jehovah thy God shall choose out of all your tribes

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to put His name there." This reform had been made possible by political changes mentioned already, and the Deuteronomist tells us why he set such store by it. It did away with high places associated from of old with Canaanite superstition, and likely, therefore, to corrupt the purity of Israel's worship. Moreover, the unity of the altar served to drive home the principle that the Israelite was to serve Jehovah alone, and made it much easier to keep watch over the ritual, now that it was limited to a single place, and that place the capital. From this prohibition other changes followed. The country Levites (and in Deuteronomy priest and Levite are synonymous terms) were deprived of their occupation, though they were free to minister at Jerusalem (xviii. 6). In ancient Israel all slaughter had been sacrificial, but henceforth (xii. 15) animals fit for food might be slain and eaten anywhere, provided the blood was poured out on the ground. Again, the altars over the land being abolished could no longer

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afford sanctuary to the involuntary homicide (Exod. xxi. 12-14), and cities of refuge were to replace the old asylums. The three annual feasts were to be kept at the central shrine, and thus were already on the way to forfeit their agricultural character. Such are the chief precepts of Deuteronomy, which may claim to be considered new. The civil enactments are mostly taken over from the "Book of the Covenant," and modified by the humane and kindly spirit of the later legislator.

Now, it may be thought that on the whole these innovations do not go far, and certainly Deuteronomy contains no elaborate system of ritual. The rules for the conduct of worship are few and mostly negative. In reality, however, the effect of Deuteronomy was far-reaching. The limitation of sacrifice to a single altar at Jerusalem prepared the way for the more spiritual worship of the synagogue in the many places where sacrifice had become impossible. Moreover, Deuteronomy was the first instance of a Hebrew book which

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was sacred and canonical. It is the earliest part of the Hebrew Scriptures, the first instance of a law professing to have divine authority and regulating the religious life of the nation, or, rather, the whole life of the nation on a religious basis. Israel was henceforth the “people of a book.” The rest of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Koran, all in a sense claim a position like that which Deuteronomy occupied before them. It was written by disciples of the prophets, and yet, by a strange fate, the impulse which it gave curtailed and in the end destroyed prophetic activity. The prophets had from time to time declared the will of God. But in 621 that will was laid down once for all in a document which every one could read, and which at most needed an interpreter or called for expansion which was more and more legal, less and less prophetic. The book brought the law within the reach of all. There was no longer the same need of the prophet’s guidance: the word was “very nigh” the

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pious Hebrew, in his “mouth and in his heart that he might do it” (xxx. 14). It was, indeed, far from the intention of the law-giver to depreciate the need of prophecy, but it was the inevitable effect of his work. Even the priests forfeited their former position. The traditional torah or teaching was taken from them and committed to writing, and the future belonged neither to prophet nor priest, but to the scribe learned in the law. To his interpretation the priest himself must conform. It is interesting to notice that the word “scribe” first occurs in Jeremiah, the contemporary of the Deuteronomic legislation.

(3) *The Blessings Promised by the Deuteronomic Code Withheld.*—The people of Judah, then, had bound themselves in solemn covenant to the worship of Jehovah, nor is there reason to doubt the sincerity of their professions on the whole, though, of course, it was easier to observe the ritual prohibitions than to make righteous and merciful dealing the controlling force of national life. For a time Judah seemed to reap

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the reward of its works. The reign of the good king Josiah was peaceful and prosperous from 621 to 608. Nineveh was growing weaker and weaker, and it was natural to hope that Judah might at last recover its political independence. The bright prospect, however, was soon overcast. In 608 Josiah met in battle Pharaoh Necho, who invaded Palestine, and at Megiddo the Jewish king fell. Necho himself was defeated four years later at Carchemish, on the Upper Euphrates. But Judah gained nothing by this. The power of Babylon rose on the ruins of the Assyrian empire, and Judah had to accept the change of masters, to become the vassal of Babylon as formerly it had been the vassal of Assyria. Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, ascended the throne of Judah by command of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, and reigned instead of his brother, Jehoahaz, the nominee of Egypt. In 597 Jerusalem paid the penalty of revolt from Babylon: the city was taken, and the flower of the population was led captive, with Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim, who had died

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during the siege. Eleven years passed away and Zedekiah, the King of Judah, renounced his allegiance to Babylon and intrigued with Pharaoh Hophra. At last, in 586, Jerusalem was taken: this time it was utterly wasted and the temple was levelled with the ground.

We may well believe that the problem of religion was dark and intricate to the Hebrew nation after the disaster of Megiddo and during the miserable years which followed it. Judah had accepted Jehovah's law and striven to observe it loyally. It had done so under a king pious and devoted beyond almost all his predecessors to the service of Israel's God. Now, the law promulgated in 621 is never weary of reiterating promises of peace, victory, plenty to the nation if it did what its God required. "That it may be well with thee" is a phrase which occurs like a refrain constantly repeated and expanded. How was it, then, that just in the period of reform the hope which it naturally evoked had been so bitterly disappointed? There were

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some who believed that redemption was near. For the moment Jehovah appeared to have forgotten His people, but each humiliation which they suffered could only increase His wrath against their foes, and speedy retribution was sure to follow. The fact that the temple remained uninjured down to the final catastrophe of 586 was in itself a pledge of Jehovah's presence, and the assurance that He would not suffer the fate of Samaria to fall upon Jerusalem. There were others who took an opposite view. The piety which Deuteronomy recommended had, as they thought, failed on trial. They did not indeed propose to abandon the national worship; but they reverted to the Assyrian worship of the heavenly bodies, thus uniting discordant elements. We hear nothing of any attempt to revive the sacrifices on the high places, but the temple became a pantheon and many foreign cults grew popular, now that Jehovah could not or would not help.

(4) *Jeremiah.* — In such times first prosperous, then so evil that the very existence

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of the prophetic religion seemed to be in the utmost peril, Jeremiah lived and worked. He was called to the prophetic office in 626 when the Scythian hordes threatened to devastate Palestine. This danger, contrary to the prophet's expectation, was averted, and there is plausible reason for thinking (see *Jer. xi.*) that he took some part in promulgating the Deuteronomic code. If so, he learned ere long to doubt the depth and reality of the reformation, and when Josiah fell and Jehoiakim reigned, he continued to insist on moral amendment. He sharply rebuked the vain trust in the temple, and he awoke the furious opposition of priests, prophets, and people by declaring that it would be swept away. He was in imminent risk of his life, and Uriah, a prophet of the same school, was actually murdered. From first to last he was *sibi constans*: he stood like an iron pillar or a wall of brass. In 604, at the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign, when Jeremiah had been prophesying for nearly a quarter of a century, he dictated to Baruch, his amanuensis, the oracles which

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he had delivered during that long course of years, and when the king burnt the roll, he caused the messages of woe to be written again, and added "many like words." Time after time he denounced the policy of intrigue and conspiracy against the Babylonian power. When Jehoiachin was taken captive he warned those who shared the exile of their king that all hope of speedy restoration was vain. When under Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, the Babylonian troops once more beleaguered the capital of Judah, he declared that voluntary surrender was the only hope. He was not deceived, though the people were, when the advance of Hophra, the Egyptian king, interrupted the siege for a moment. "Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us; for they shall not depart." Jeremiah himself escaped the fate which fell upon so many of his countrymen: instead of being carried to Babylon he remained for a time at Mizpah, a little way north of Jerusalem, under Gedaliah, the governor, an upright and kindly man.

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Soon, however, Gedaliah was treacherously murdered, and the Hebrews who had been his subjects fled, against Jeremiah's counsel, to Egypt. They took the prophet with them by force, and when we hear of him last, he is engaged in his old conflict with idolatry and superstition. The fugitives looked upon him as a man with supernatural powers which might bring them good luck, as a soothsayer whom it might be convenient to consult: they had no serious intention of shaping their faith and conduct by his teaching.

Jeremiah's life was a long tragedy, and so far his experiences do not differ in kind from those of Hosea. In reality, however, Jeremiah had new ideas never so clearly realised before. Circumstances made him understand, better than former prophets had done, the weakness and instability of the human heart. "The heart is deceitful above all things: who can know it? I, Jehovah, search the heart" (xvii. 9-10). Others had contended with the worship of other gods, or opposed the mixture of Jehovah's religion

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with heathenish rites: it was reserved for Jeremiah to condemn the pious self-complacency of those who had accepted the Deuteronomic reform. “How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of Jehovah is with us? But, behold, the false pen of the scribes hath made it falsehood.” People imagined that sacrifice was necessarily pleasing to God, now that it was offered on the one legitimate altar. To Jeremiah it was the moral and humane teaching of Deuteronomy which had real value. The ritual reform might be well so far as it went, but it was the means, not the end, and the “scribes,” or expounders of the law, those men of the book who, as we have said, make their first appearance here, laid the stress on the wrong place. So when Jeremiah contrasts the idolatrous and tyrannical life of Jehoiakim with that of Josiah his father, he dwells on that father’s simple, honest life, and is quite silent about his ritual reform: “Did not thy father eat and drink, and do justice? then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the

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poor and needy ; then it was well." He saw, too, that evil habits bind a man fast in chains that cannot be broken ; that sin is not an isolated act ; that the will might be depraved till sin became part of the nature. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? then may ye also do good, that are used to do evil" (xiii. 23). He demands spiritual circumcision ;<sup>1</sup> in other words, the nature itself is to be changed : the mean and selfish desire is to be cut off from the heart. "Wash you ; make you clean" had been Isaiah's cry. Jeremiah, on the contrary, had learned that man has no power to cleanse his heart ; and as Isaiah is the prophet of faith, so we may call Jeremiah the prophet of divine grace. There is no need to urge in proof passages of doubtful authenticity in which the author, whoever he may have been, looks forward to a happy time when God Himself would write His law in His people's heart (xxxii. 18).

<sup>1</sup> Spiritual circumcision is mentioned in Deut. x. 16, xxx. 6. But these passages are additions to the code, and the idea probably originated with Jeremiah.

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33), and incline them to His fear (xxxii. 40). We shall find enough for our purpose in the prophet's personal experience as he discloses it to us, in his struggle and despair, in the victory over his own soul which he won by divine communion.

What, then, was the unique experience of the prophet to which we have referred? He was the loneliest of men. "The word of Jehovah came to me, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife, neither shalt thou have sons and daughters in this place" (xvi. 1). He had the deepest and tenderest love for his nation, and yet he incurred the bitterest hatred of his countrymen; and this was natural, for all that he said tended to weaken the warrior's heart, and he had no counsel save the counsel of despair. Looking back we can appreciate in some degree the agony of his soul, but at the time there were few to understand and fewer still to pity and sympathise. With passionate vehemence he complained of his bitter destiny and wished he had never been born. "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast

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borne me a man of strife and of contention to all the land . . . every one of them doth curse me" (xv. 10). "Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein I was born be blessed. . . . Wherefore came I forth out of the womb, that my days should be consumed with shame?" (xx. 14, *seq.*). It was no pleasure for one who loved his nation so well to prophesy evil. "Remember how I stood before Thee to speak good for them, to turn away Thy fury from them" (xviii. 20). He was young when the divine call came, and he little thought how bitter and dreary his lot was to be: he felt as if Jehovah Himself had allured him by false expectation. "Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived. . . . I am become a laughing-stock all the day, every one mocketh me. . . . The word of Jehovah is made a reproach to me, and a derision, all the day" (xx. 7). Treachery and violence beset him on every side. Fain would he have desisted from his work. But it might not be. "If I say, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name, then

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there is in my heart a burning fire . . . and I cannot contain" (xx. 9). In such dire extremity Jeremiah learned to know himself. He became aware of the mysterious mixture of good and evil influences which warred within him. He learned on the one hand that God's service is man's highest reward, and on the other, that none can serve God save with that purity of intention which God only can bestow. "Why," he asks, "is my pain continual, my wound past cure?" And this is the divine answer: "If thou turnest, I will turn thee, and before my face shalt thou stand. And if thou shalt bring forth the precious from the vile, then shalt thou be as my mouth" (xv. 19). In conversion man's will corresponds to God's grace, and then an infinite strength is enlisted on man's side and victory is secure.

Thus "Jeremiah is the father of that true prayer, in which the trembling soul utters at once the wretchedness which sinks it below, and its trust which raises it above, humanity, its doubt, its fear, its immovable confidence.

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Without Jeremiah the psalms could never have been written. Piety borrowed its language from him, and religious poetry took many a figure from the history of his life.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wellhausen, *Israel u. jüdisch Gesch.*, p. 106.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE UNKNOWN PROPHET OF THE EXILE

#### THE “SECOND ISAIAH”

(1) *As an Evangelist.*—When the exile had lasted for a generation and more, a prophet, whose very name is unknown to us, arose with a message for the Israelites in Babylonian lands. He did not speak to them as Jeremiah had spoken to their fathers. He could not, indeed, share the patriotic optimism of Jeremiah's foes, who protested that the temple was Jehovah's dwelling-place and therefore inviolable. The destruction of the temple had for long been an accomplished fact, and Jeremiah's predictions had been fulfilled beyond the possibility of question. Yet, whereas Jeremiah's prospect had been dark, the new prophet foresaw a splendid vista opening out before his people. The expectation, indeed, was not peculiar to himself,

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for other voices than his had announced the dissipation of the impending gloom, and hailed the dawn of a new age. It was he, however, who gave immortal expression to the common hope, and was inspired with a profound sense of the divine mercy and wisdom, and of the great place which Israel was to hold in the history of mankind.

(2) *As a Lyric Poet.*—In the first words of his lyric utterance—for in form he was a poet who meditated and poured forth his soul in verse, rather than a speaker who addressed a listening crowd—he strikes the note which dominates throughout. “Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem, and say unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned” (xl. 1, 2). The woe which Jeremiah foresaw was over and was not to recur. The rise of Cyrus and his victories filled the Jews with hope under Babylonian domination. The hope was not to be disappointed, and better things were to follow. “Behold, the former things” (*i.e.* the victory of Cyrus,

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foretold, apparently, by former prophets in the exile) “are come to pass, and new things” (*i.e.* Israel’s restoration) “do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. Sing unto Jehovah a new song” (xlii. 9). The nation had perished, but the Jewish Church was indestructible, and nothing could stay or hinder the predestined mission of Israel.

(3) *As a Theologian.* — The author of Isaiah xl.—lv. is a lyric poet of the first rank: he is also a theologian, and in him the monotheism of the pre-exilic prophets becomes full, definite, and explicit. To him God is the creator for whom difficulty has no existence (xl. 12, 22). All that lives, lives through Him. All things serve Him, the powers of the world, the stormy sea, the stars of heaven. “Before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me. I, even I, am Jehovah, and beside Me there is no saviour” (xlivi. 10). The mighty gods of Babel are mere idols that can neither hurt nor help. Of the true God no likeness can be found. “All nations are as nothing

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before Him. . . . Unto whom then will ye liken God? . . . The image, a workman melted it" (xl. 17, *seq.*). "They have no knowledge that carry the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save" (xlv. 20). Thus Jehovah is God alone, and will not surrender His honour to another, or the praise that is His own "to graven images" (xlii. 8). He is eternal (xli. 4), almighty (xlv. 7), holy (xl. 25). He alone can predict the future, because He alone guides the whole history of the world according to His will.

### THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL IN SECOND ISAIAH

Jehovah, however, is not only the God of the whole world: He is, in a special sense, the "Holy One of Israel."<sup>1</sup> Evidently the Second Isaiah was familiar with the earlier portions of the Pentateuch. He reminds his readers how God called Abraham when he was a childless man and multiplied his descendants (li. 2), and led His people across

<sup>1</sup> The Second Isaiah has adopted the phrase from Isaiah, the prophet of Hezekiah's time.

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the Red Sea (xlivi. 16, *seq.*, li. 9–10), and came to its help continually through all its changing fortunes. Israel is still the object of His love. He is Israel's King (xlivi. 15) and Father (xlv. 11), He regards it with more than a mother's tenderness (xlix. 15, *seq.*). Above all, He cannot forget Zion. “Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of My hands; and thy gates are continually before Me” (xlix. 16).

Here, however, an obvious question demands an answer—Why did God, if He is almighty and has so strong a love for Israel, abandon it to the Babylonian oppressor? Why did He allow a seeming triumph to the Babylonian idols and leave men to infer His own weakness? The answer is, that no weakness is possible to God: to the Second Isaiah, who is theologian and prophet in one, the very thought of charging Jehovah with lack of power, or of comparing Him with the heathen gods who are but idols, is blasphemous folly. Israel's sin and God's righteousness caused the exile. “Behold,

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for your iniquities were ye sold, and for your transgressions was your mother put away" (l. 1). Now, however, the punishment inflicted was more than enough. Israel "had received double for all her sins" (xl. 2).<sup>1</sup> Jehovah never meant to abandon Israel for ever. He had given her no "bill of divorce" (l. 1). Moreover, though Israel was in the wrong as against God, she was in the right when compared with other nations. The Israelites after all had the knowledge of the true God, and were free on the whole from idolatry. Therefore, the same divine righteousness which pronounced the doom of exile sends the good news of restoration. In the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions Jehovah had done "a strange work," for He had strengthened the heathen against His own people. Now once more His work is strange, but in quite another sense. God chooses the Persian conqueror Cyrus and makes him the instrument of

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Aesch. Agam. 537, διπλᾶ δ' ἔτισαν Πριαμίδαι θάμαρτια.

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redemption. Jehovah has called him “from the east,” and made kings weak as dust or stubble before him. The city gates open at his bidding, because Jehovah holds him by the hand. Cyrus is the shepherd of God’s people: he is the “anointed of Jehovah” (xlv. 1), a title borne of old by David and his successors on the throne. Nebuchadnezzar, no doubt, had been called Jehovah’s servant by Jeremiah (xxvii. 6). But what a contrast in the application of the term! The Assyrian king had been the minister of Jehovah’s wrath, Cyrus is the minister of His mercy and love. “Cyrus is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure: even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built, and the foundation of the temple shall be laid” (xli. 28). Nor does the contrast end here: Nebuchadnezzar was the unconscious organ of Jehovah, whereas Cyrus is to know that it is Jehovah the God of Israel who has called him by name (xlv. 3).

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## ISRAEL'S MISSION TO THE NATIONS AS CONCEIVED BY THE SECOND ISAIAH

The victory of God's righteousness is to be known and recognised all over the earth, and hence all nations are to share at last in the coming glory. In the Second Isaiah the national religion of Israel has almost become the religion of mankind. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (xlv. 22). "The sea-coasts hope for Me, and wait for My arm" (li. 5). God's thoughts are far higher than man's, and Israel wins its great victory as a preacher of truth and righteousness. It is a missionary people: its mouth is as a sharp sword and polished arrow (xlix. 2), and it is to be the "light of nations" and the vehicle of salvation for all (xlix. 6). Its office is to teach the heathen, and God for that end has clothed it with His Spirit (xlvi. 1), so, though all flesh is grass, Israel endures, because the word of Jehovah

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which Israel proclaims endures for ever (xl. 8).

*The Servant of Jehovah.*—It is when the Second Isaiah personifies the ideal Israel as the “Servant of Jehovah” that his thought soars highest. He is well aware that the actual achievements of Israel in the past have been poor and unworthy. “Who is blind, but My servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I send?” (xlvi. 19). “Thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob; thou hast been weary of Me, O Israel” (xlvi. 22). “Thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities” (24). But in his mind’s eye the poet saw another Israel, which was the perpetual recipient of revelation and the prophet of the human race. “The Lord Jehovah hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I should know how to sustain with words: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear, as they that are taught” (l. 4). Israel, so far as he is faithful to his mission, is the servant of Jehovah. He leads others to that true piety which yields itself in

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patient trust to a gracious God. "He that walketh in darkness, and hath no light,—let him trust in the name of Jehovah, and stay upon his God" (l. 10). Nor is this all. The poet has a view deeper still of Israel's place in the history of the world and of religion. Called to be the prophet of the nations, Israel has been faithful to his call, and has nevertheless perished. Israel, however, has only died to live: he has ceased to be that he may rise again in a glorious restoration. The Hebrews, scattered among the nations, have by that very fact been enabled everywhere by word and deed to proclaim the true religion. Israel, the servant of Jehovah, has fulfilled his task in meek endurance, welcoming and fostering the least spark of religious truth in alien nations. "He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. A bruised reed shall He not break: the flickering flame He shall not quench" (xlii. 1-3). The sufferings which he bore he bore willingly in conflict for the truth. In consequence he was treated with contempt, and men

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shrank from him as if he had been a leper and the object of divine wrath. Then when God exalts His servant in a way most marvellous and unforeseen, the heathen come to a better mind. They see that the servant bore a punishment which they themselves deserved; that His willing sacrifice of Himself was part of the divine plan for the conversion of the world. "Yea, but surely He hath borne our griefs." "The discipline of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we were healed." "All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every man to his own way, and Jehovah laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Here it is to be observed that this profound writer deals with facts. He has no formal theory of atonement. It is enough for him to know that Israel did not suffer in vain; that he was chosen by God as the means of reconciling the world with Himself.

To sum up. The Second Isaiah has exalted views of God's almighty power, and of the merciful and gracious ends to which He guides the history of the world. He has

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not parted with the old notion that Israel is God's favourite people and must always retain its superiority. Yet he knows that Israel is elected to be a prophet of righteousness for all the world, and he does not dream that Israel alone is to experience the mercy of God and to attain communion with Him. He saw how suffering could be transformed into blessing; that the pain which falls on the righteous is efficacious for the conversion of sinners. He raised the idea of sacrifice to the ethical plane. It is no longer realised in irrational creatures slain without any will of their own, but in the self-oblation of God's chosen Servant. In a sense the words of the Second Isaiah transcend his own thoughts. The picture of the suffering servant was not realised, nor could it be, till God the Son took our nature upon Him and was manifested at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE TRANSITION FROM PROPHETIC TO LEGAL RELIGION

#### **A. EZEKIEL: THE TIME IN WHICH HE LIVED, AND HIS PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

(1) *Ezekiel and the Law of Holiness.*—Ezekiel, as he himself tells us, was called to the prophetic office in 592, while the latest of his writings which has come down to us is dated 570. Thus he ended his career, so far at least as we know, more than a generation before that of the Second Isaiah had begun. If, therefore, we had followed the chronological order, we should have spoken of Ezekiel in the preceding chapter. We place him here because the great final development of Hebrew religion sprang from his teaching. Law replaced prophecy, and Ezekiel is the father

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of that law which occupies most of the Pentateuch and sets its stamp on the Jews at this day. By his means especially the nation became a Church, and a Church bound by minute ritual enactments. The Second Isaiah gave noble utterance to the loftiest thoughts which prophecy ever reached. His influence was potent through the ages, and at this hour his message of comfort and hope finds its way to many hearts. Ezekiel's influence was far more palpable at the time; it told at once, and on a large scale, but it has much less interest for Christians now. The Second Isaiah had been concerned with the spirit of religion. Ezekiel sought to provide this spirit with a body. Nor can we doubt that his work was good and most necessary for the times in which he lived, as well as for those which were soon to follow. External signs were needed if the Church scattered among the nations was to hold together: ritual had to be carefully regulated, for regulation was the only safeguard against the heathen and immoral elements which

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had polluted it. Ezekiel was well fitted for the task. He was a priest, and so was Jeremiah. But Ezekiel belonged, unlike Jeremiah, to the priestly aristocracy, the sons of Zadok, who controlled the temple at Jerusalem, and whereas Jeremiah was a priest by descent merely, Ezekiel had a priest's heart and spirit. At the same time he did not fail to be a prophet also with a burning zeal for righteousness and a sure trust in the prophetic revelation which he received.

(2) *The Three Parts of His Book.*—The book which Ezekiel wrote falls into three divisions. The first of these extends to the end of the twenty-fourth chapter. He had gone into exile with the flower of his people in 597, and five years later the call of God reached him by the banks of the Chebar, a canal east of Nippur and a little way to the south-east of Babylon. His inaugural vision is much longer than that of Isaiah or even of Jeremiah, but it cannot be compared either for simplicity or sublimity with the picture drawn by his predecessors. He had

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still a public which he could address, for the exiles enjoyed a certain amount of political independence, and he was free to work among them. He does not seem to have come into contact with the exiles of 586 : probably they were deported to another quarter on grounds of political expediency.

(3) *His View of Israel's Past.*—At first Ezekiel's view of the national future is exceedingly sombre. His message, like that of the older prophets, is a message of doom. Even they had at least believed in an early and golden age when all was well with Israel. “When Israel was young,” says Hosea, “then I loved him.” Isaiah looked back to the time when Jerusalem was “full of judgment,” and “righteousness lodged in her.” Jeremiah refers in pathetic tones to the “kindness” of Israel’s youth, the “joy of her espousals” to her God. Ezekiel, on the contrary, regarded Israel as depraved from the beginning: “The Amorite was thy father, and thy mother a Hittite” (xvi. 3). The Hebrews had attached themselves to the idols of Egypt, and provoked Jehovah

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in the wilderness. The destruction of the nation was the only way in which God could vindicate His righteousness. City and people were incorrigible, and must perish utterly. A few, indeed, are to escape, as a few must escape even from the most unsparing massacre. But these Jehovah leaves alive that they may bear witness among the nations to the extreme wickedness which brought the final ruin on the city and on the land (vi. 8, 9).

(4) *His Doctrine of Free-will and the Hope He drew from it.*—Things being so bad as this, surely it followed that Israel could be the people of Jehovah no longer. There were, however, tokens left of the bond between the exiles and their God. They could not indeed sacrifice to Jehovah, for they were far from the one legitimate altar, and ere long temple and altar were to perish. But circumcision, of which Jeremiah had made so light, was to Ezekiel the sign of the sacramental covenant between Jehovah and Israel.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Ezekiel set

<sup>1</sup> This is clearly implied in xliv. 7. Comp. Gen. xvii. (P.).

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the highest value on the Sabbath, here, too, diverging from the view of the older prophets. "Hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, and you shall know that I am Jehovah" (xx. 20). He insists repeatedly that profanation of the Sabbath was among the worst of the sins for which Israel had been driven into exile. Of course, these two signs were quite insufficient by themselves. The inward grace must be added to the external token. Here a great principle came to Ezekiel's help. In answer to the despairing cry, "Our sins are upon us, . . . how then shall we live?" (xxxiii. 10), he replies that every man may live if he uses the gift of free-will and turns from bad to good. He states this doctrine of free-will in that crude and exaggerated form which is inevitable with ideas which are still new. Every man is to be tried on his merits. No man can atone for his brother. The worst man may turn at any moment, and the most virtuous man may suddenly fall. Everything then depends on a man's moral and religious state when

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the trial comes. This judgment occurs, and must occur, in the present life; for as yet there was no belief that full human consciousness outlasted the death of the body. Being limited in this way, the result of the judgment appears to be somewhat arbitrary, while the statement that any man can at any moment turn from evil to good needs serious modification. Still, it marks an important advance in ethics, and was sorely needed to balance the older view which also had its partial truth that the children are involved in the sin of their parents.

(5) *The Destruction of Jerusalem as the beginning of a New and Better Order.*—In the first division of his book, Ezekiel's view of individual responsibility is scarcely operative. He has to admit that righteous men will perish in the capture of Jerusalem, and that some of the wicked will escape. But the final doom came, and Ezekiel's hand was free. “It came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one who had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto

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me, saying, The city is smitten. Now the hand of Jehovah had been upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came; and He opened my mouth when He came to me in the evening; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb.”<sup>1</sup> Hence, in xxv.—xxxii. we have a series of prophecies against the heathen. By punishing them Jehovah was to vindicate His own righteousness, and, having seemed weaker, was to prove Himself infinitely stronger than the heathen gods. The neighbouring nations had exulted in the fall of Jerusalem, or they had deluded Judah with false hopes, or they were types of godless luxury and pride. They are to “know that I am Jehovah” (xxix. 26). At last the way was cleared, the old order had passed away: the heathen were soon to be powerless, and Ezekiel, having denounced and pulled down, began to build up. He built up the Jewish Church on the foundation of a sacerdotal law.

(6) *Ezekiel a Pastor of Souls.*—In order

<sup>1</sup> xxxiii. 21, 22. A slight emendation has been made in the text; comp. xxiv. 25, *seq.*

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to build up this new Church Ezekiel turned to individuals, and is, in fact, the first pastor of souls whom we know. He starts with that belief in individual responsibility which he had already formulated (xiv., xviii.). But this section of his work (xxxiii.-xxxix.) absolutely excludes the notion that Ezekiel is a mere moralist who states the law and leaves people to choose evil or good as they like. Far from this, God through His prophet pleads passionately with sinners. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" "As I live, saith Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." He had a lofty ideal of the pastoral office, and knew that God would require the blood of souls at his hand if he failed to warn them. Again, in spite of his Pelagian view, as some might be inclined to call it, on free-will, Ezekiel regards the work of conversion as essentially divine. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. . . . A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you

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a heart of flesh" (xxxvi. 25, 26). It is of the utmost moment to note this passage if we would not misjudge the priestly code and Ezekiel, its primary author. Ezekiel encouraged no man to believe that he could be saved by ceremonial. First the Jews repent, are forgiven, are regenerate, receive the Holy Spirit, and in consequence keep the commandments. Then and only then do they receive the great ritual law propounded in chap. xl.-xlviii.

### *(7) Ezekiel's Scheme for Securing the Permanent Abode of Jehovah with His People.*

*(a) By Changing the Structure and Environment of the Temple.*—This last section, and with it, of course, the whole book, closes with the grand words: "The name of the city shall be called Jehovah is there." To secure this end strict regulations are indispensable. Nor are these regulations simply ethical. No doubt Jehovah requires justice and mercy, of which Ezekiel has said much in the previous sections, but in many re-

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spects Ezekiel thinks of Him as one who is offended as a human king might be by undue familiarity or by the proximity of things physically displeasing. Accordingly the new temple is to stand in a great space of 25,000 ells by 20,000. A belt of uncultivated land is to protect it on each side. South of it lies the land of the priests, and farther south still the capital which is to be held by the tribes in common. The temple is to have two courts, of which the inner one containing the altar is accessible only to priests and Levites. A change indeed from the time when Hannah prayed before the altar and Samuel slept within the sacred precincts, hard by the ark of God! Now also the temple was to be utterly removed from the royal palace and cemetery. In the old days this proximity was natural, for the temple had been the king's chapel. But such proximity was, in Ezekiel's eyes, an outrage on the divine "holiness" or "aloofness," for this latter is, in all likelihood, the original sense of the word. "The house of Israel shall no more

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defile My name, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredoms [*i.e.* their idolatries], and by the carcases of their kings ; in their setting of their threshold by My threshold, and their door post under My door post, and there was but the wall between Me and them ; and they have defiled My holy name by their abominations which they have committed : wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger. Now let them put away their whoredom, and the carcases of their kings, far from Me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever" (xlivi. 7-9).

(β) *By Changes in the Temple Staff.*—Next, "holiness" was maintained by radical changes in the temple staff. Hitherto the royal guard had done the inferior work in the temple, and the building had been under their protection. This is very clear from the history of the revolution in 2 Kings xi., and it is most interesting to compare the parallel account by the Chronicler, since he has substituted Levites for the king's guards, who keep watch in the temple according to the older writer. We must remember, too,

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that these guards were recruited, in part at least, from foreign nations, and then we can feel the force of Ezekiel's indignation. "O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations, in that ye have brought aliens, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, into My house, to be in My sanctuary, to profane it, even in My house, when ye offer My bread, the fat, and blood" (xliv. 6, 7). They are to be replaced by the Levite priests, who had served at the high places throughout the land. These are to be degraded from their priestly functions, and are simply to slay the victims and keep watch in the house. The offering of the fat and blood on the altar is limited to the sons of Zadok, who now constitute the legitimate line of succession. Ezekiel makes no secret (how could he?) of the fact that his institutions are novel. The Levites had been priests: they are so no more, and have to "bear their shame." Solomon had set aside the ancient priesthood of the Elidæ in the person of Abiathar, and had exalted the *novus homo* Zadok.

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Ezekiel puts the Zadokites in a position which is divinely sanctioned, and which, therefore, no earthly king can take away. Great care is taken to preserve the priests thus selected in ritual purity. They are to wear no woollen garment: they must not approach a corpse, except that of parent, child, brother, or unmarried sister (xlv. 25). On the other hand, to prevent the mixture of holy and profane, they are to lay aside their vestments before they pass from the inner to the outer court, "that they sanctify not the people with their garments" (xlv. 19).

(γ) *By the Sin-Offering*.—However, even when communion with Jehovah had been restored, and He had returned once more to the temple that He might dwell in the midst of His people, men with the stern experience of the exile before them might well dread that Jehovah would be driven away once more by the sin and ritual impurity of the Israelites. Ezekiel provided a remedy for this in the sin-offering and guilt-offering. These are technical words which he of all the Old Testament writers extant is the first to use

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(xl. 39), though he presupposes a knowledge of the terms, and cannot therefore have invented them. By a sin-offering the temple was to be cleansed on the first day of the first month, *i.e.* at the opening of the new year according to Babylonian reckoning, and on the first day of the seventh month when the agricultural year observed by the Hebrews before the exile began (xlv. 18, *seq.*; LXX.). The rite was not intended to blot out deliberate sin: it was an expiation for “every one that erreth and is simple,” *i.e.* for unwilling transgressions which Amos or Isaiah would not have regarded as sins at all. Wicked men had perished in the overthrow of Judah, and Jehovah would set His face against the sinful remnant to destroy it. Still, even when the process of sifting had been accomplished, and God had given His Church “a new heart,” the most pious in intention might offend Him unawares. Against this disaster the sin and guilt-offerings were the provision. From like motives Ezekiel carefully regulated the annual feasts, Passover and Tabernacles. He fixed for the first time their precise date

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in the calendar, thus impairing their agricultural character, since in a country like Palestine with great varieties of climate, it was a matter of impossibility to begin harvest or gather the grapes and olives in the same week or even in the same month. Each feast has its prescribed list of victims, so that little or nothing is left to individual initiation. In all the sin-offering is prominent. The year falls into two halves. The Day of Atonement on the first day of the first month was followed by Passover on the fourteenth, and a second Day of Atonement on the first day of the seventh month was followed by Tabernacles on the fifteenth. Possibly for reasons of symmetry Pentecost is ignored.<sup>1</sup>

In the new order of things which Ezekiel contemplated, the royal power all but faded away. Nothing was left for the king to do. He had been the leader in war. Now war was to cease. Heathen nations from the Black Sea to Abyssinia, from Elam to Tartessus in

<sup>1</sup> In xlvi. 21, "feast of weeks" is an ungrammatical corruption of the text. The Versions preserve the correct reading.

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Spain, were under Gog from the land of Magog to unite in one last desperate effort against the city and land of Jehovah, and were to be utterly exterminated. Herewith all possibility of war was at an end for ever. Again, the king had been supreme judge, but now the chief cases which could arise were ruled by the written law, or left to the decision of the priest. Hence Ezekiel speaks not of a king but of a prince, and the chief business of this shadowy figure is to supply the cost of the public sacrifices from his domain.

Ezekiel exercised a profound influence on all subsequent Judaism. We have already seen that he is the father of the priestly law. We may add that he is also the first Apocalyptic writer, since he looks forward to a future which is to come by miracle, and has no organic connection with the time at which the prophet wrote. Moreover, though he did not create, he expressed the deepened sense of guilt which is presupposed by St Paul and in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Lastly, it is to him we owe the first idea of theocracy, the idea of a state in which

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God holds the supreme rule, and exercises it through His priests or ministers. We all know that this ideal reappeared in the popes of the middle ages, in Calvin's rule at Geneva, and among a section of the Scotch Presbyterians. Attempts to realise it have always ended in disaster. If they were attended with some measure of success among the Jews, that was only because the Jews from Ezekiel's time and onwards ceased to be a nation, and became a Church subject in the chief concerns of secular life to heathen masters.

### B. THE “LAW OF HOLINESS”

(1) *Its Purpose.*—The moral and ritual law which Ezekiel promulgated in Jehovah's name never obtained public recognition. In fact, a difficulty was raised against the reception of his book into the canon on the ground that the code which he proposed differed in detail from that which was finally accepted, and which was attributed to Jehovah speaking through Moses. It was not, says

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the Talmudic legend, till Hananiah, the contemporary of Gamaliel, St. Paul's teacher, had consumed three hundred measures of oil in the study of Ezekiel that the objection was at last overcome. In reality, however, the school to which Ezekiel belonged and the ideas which he represented did succeed. About Ezekiel's time a brief code, now generally known as the "Law of Holiness," was written and published. It presents most remarkable resemblances to Ezekiel both in style and matter, and it is still preserved in Lev. xvii.-xxvi. as a constituent part of the Pentateuch. It grew at last into the Priestly Code which occupies a great part of Exodus and Numbers, and nearly the whole of Leviticus with the exception just mentioned. These codes represent attempts made by many men working in the same spirit to order public worship and daily life, and to remove with the utmost care all that could offend Jehovah and relax the bond between Himself and His people.

(2) *Proof that It once Formed a Code Apart.*—We shall begin by examining the

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“Law of Holiness,” but first something must be said of the reasons which justify us in treating it as a separate code, and separating it from the rest of Leviticus. At the end of Lev. xxvi. we read, “These are the statutes and judgements and laws, which Jehovah made between Himself and the children of Israel on Mount Sinai.” Now this cannot refer to the Pentateuch as a whole, or to the Priestly Code apart from Deuteronomy and the earlier “Book of the Covenant” (Exod. xx.-xxiii.), for the simple reason that many more “statutes and judgements” follow in Lev. xxvii. and in the Book of Numbers. Again, the laws mentioned at the end of Lev. xxvi. are said to have been given on Sinai, whereas according to Exod. xxxiv. 29 Moses had long ago come down from the Mount, and he is represented as receiving the subsequent revelation at the tent of meeting which stood in the midst of the camp. These arguments are clinched by the whole tenor of Lev. xxvi. This chapter consists of a few promises to those who keep the law, of many and awful threats in case of dis-

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obedience, besides a message of comfort to Israelites who have paid the penalty of their sin by exile, and then in a strange land have repented and turned to their God. The “Book of the Covenant” and Deuteronomy (xxviii.) also conclude with promises and threats, and it is very natural that a code should so terminate. Clearly, then, Lev. xxvi. points back to a separate body of law. We have recovered the Book of the Covenant and the Deuteronomic legislation. Can we part off the code enforced by the threats and promises of Lev. xxvi.?

This question may be confidently answered in the affirmative. In Lev. xvii.–xxv.<sup>1</sup> most of the laws are separated by striking peculiarities of style and matter from the rest of the Pentateuch. Chapter xxvi., if we omit the colophon, closes abruptly with the words, “I am Jehovah,” and the divine personality assumes the same prominence all through the chapter under consideration. In xviii.–xxv. the

<sup>1</sup> A few other passages in Leviticus and Numbers are also assigned with great probability to the “Law of Holiness.” See the table at the beginning of this volume.

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formula, “I am Jehovah,” or, “I am Jehovah, your God,” recurs about forty-three times against six instances of its use in the rest of the Pentateuch. Further, a quite unique prominence is given to the holiness of Jehovah which demands a corresponding holiness on the part of His people. “Ye shall be holy: for I am holy” (xix. 2) is a phrase which is repeated over and over again with slight varieties of form. It is, of course, from this feature that the code has got its modern name, “The Law of Holiness.” There are, besides, differences of matter as distinct from style between the “Law of Holiness” and the Priestly Code which will be discussed later. Here it is enough to say that the “Law of Holiness” does not presuppose the scenery of desert life; that in it the high-priest is still only *primus inter pares*; that all slaughter is sacrifice; that only three feasts are recognised, and that these still retain their original agricultural significance. Besides the “Law of Holiness” insists that there is but one place of sacrifice, a thing which the Priestly Code takes for granted,

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and it attacks idolatry with a vigour for which the authors of the Priestly Code no longer saw occasion. It also contains a much larger element of moral and humanitarian legislation. It stands, in short, midway between Deuteronomy and the Priestly Code.

(3) *Its Date.*—This of itself leads naturally to the conclusion that the “Law of Holiness” is more or less contemporaneous with Ezekiel, especially as Lev. xxvi. presupposes the exile and is written with an intensity of feeling which goes far to prove that the exile was not yet over. We may now advance a step farther. So closely does the language employed in the “Law of Holiness” resemble the language of Ezekiel that Graf, who first advocated the theory on the composition of the Hexateuch, which is now generally accepted in its main features, held that the “Law of Holiness” was directly due to Ezekiel himself. This, no doubt, is an error, since Ezekiel cannot have written two separate codes, one in spirit but diverse and even contradictory in detail. Still, the

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evidence that prophet and legislator belong to the same time and school is decisive. In chap. xxvi. alone there are twenty-six expressions common to Ezekiel, and found nowhere else in the Old Testament, besides thirteen more found nowhere else in the Pentateuch. It is simply inconceivable that Ezekiel should have drawn so much of his vocabulary, so many characteristic phrases, from a single chapter of a law-book, while on the other hand the law-giver may well have been a student of Ezekiel, and have adopted almost unconsciously phrases scattered all over Ezekiel's book. Moreover, the language of the "Law of Holiness" is coloured by the influence of Ezekiel's style throughout. Common to both are such phrases as, "I am Jehovah, that sanctify you" or "them" (Ezek. xx. 12, and six times in Lev. xx., xxi., xxii.), "to profane the name of Jehovah," "to walk in My statutes," "which if a man do, he shall live by them." At the same time there are differences of language which would, even if they stood alone, tell, so far as they go, against unity

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of authorship. But it is time to pass from the form and to examine the matter of the law before us. Speaking generally, we may say that it is, like Ezekiel's legislation, written for a double purpose, viz. first, to enforce purity of life in the ethical sense, and next to maintain purity of ritual and outward usage. We do not mean by this that the author was conscious of the distinction.

(4) *Its Ethical Teaching*.—Religion from the ethical point of view sets out in the “Law of Holiness” from the great principle that Jehovah alone is to be worshipped by the Israelites who are to avoid all contact with heathen idolatry. In their despairing belief that Jehovah had forsaken His land, the Hebrews had reverted to primitive or to foreign types of superstition, and against these the law makes energetic protest (xvii. 7, xviii. 21). It recalls the Israelites to the sole worship of that God in whose name the prophets had spoken, and who had revealed Himself in the whole course of Israel's history. To the law-giver, as to the prophets before him, Jehovah was no

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pale abstraction, no mere principle of unity which satisfies speculative thought. This personal God, being holy, demands holiness from His servants. On the negative side, holiness implies the avoidance of theft and every other form of dishonesty; it is inconsistent with slander, with a revengeful spirit, with cruelty, and especially with cruelty to those who, like the blind and the deaf, can do little to help themselves. The table of prohibited degrees is enlarged in chaps. xviii. and xx. Thus marriage with the widow of a deceased brother is forbidden, although in Deut. xxv. 5 a man, if his brother leaves no issue, is bound to marry that brother's widow. Apparently the Law of Holiness desired to maintain the confidence and purity of family life by teaching near connections to treat each other as if they had been blood relations.<sup>1</sup> From similar motives it did not allow a man to marry two sisters, lest the rivalry of wives

<sup>1</sup> It is significant that the custom of marrying a deceased brother's widow, if he died childless, had become practically obsolete long before our Lord's time. See Edersheim's "Life of Jesus," ii. 400.

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should destroy the bond of sisterly affection. On the positive side it enjoins reverence for parents, respect for the aged, kindly dealings between neighbour and neighbour, charity to the poor. “When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the fallen fruit of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am Jehovah.” These laws are for the most part collected in chap. xix., and are made singularly impressive by the reiterated formula, “I am Jehovah.” They are simple and concise, instinct with tenderness of feeling, and they exhibit in a marvellous degree the fusion of religion with morality. It is, moreover, the deathless merit of this law that it sums up in one brief and noble maxim the duties of one Israelite to another: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (xix. 18). When our Lord quoted this verse He gave it a much wider meaning, for in His mouth “neighbour” meant brother-man and not merely brother-Hebrew. He also connected it with

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the precept in Deuteronomy: “Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart,” and thus bound indissolubly the love of God to the love of man. Yet though the “Law of Holiness” is not yet Christian, it prepares the way for Christianity. The love of those to whom we are most nearly bound is the best preparation for the love of all men. And even in the “Law of Holiness” love is extended from the Israelite by blood to the Israelite by religious profession, since Israel has become a church rather than a nation, and every man is potentially a Jew. “The stranger that sojourneth with you shall be unto you as the homeborn among you; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am Jehovah” (xix. 34). The “gêr,” or “metoikos,” is regarded in the “Law of Holiness” as a proselyte. Hence, like the native Hebrew, he is forbidden (xvii. 15, 16) to eat that which dies of itself. In Deuteronomy (xiv. 21) this prohibition began and ended with the Israelite born: he was free to give or sell such food to the “gêr” who dwelt within his gates.

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(5) *Its Ritual Ordinances.*—We have to consider next the ritual ordinances. Like Deuteronomy, the “Law of Holiness” insists that sacrifice must be offered at the one central shrine. So far the “Law of Holiness” is at one with the prior legislation. But Deuteronomy, being written when Judah was still in Hebrew possession, left a man free to slay and eat in any place, because it separated sacrifice and slaughter. The “Law of Holiness” reverts to the idea which prevailed before Deuteronomy—viz., that all slaughter of animals fit for sacrifice was of itself to be regarded as sacrifice, while at the same time holding fast to the later Deuteronomic rule that sacrifice must be offered at one shrine alone. It is very hard to see how the law-giver could have believed such a rule to be practicable. How could a man be expected to travel from Hebron or Tekoa to Jerusalem every time he wished to kill an ox or a sheep? It seems most likely that the law was formulated when the returned exiles occupied the capital and a

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narrow circle of land around it. If this solution be correct, we gain a valuable note of time. The penalty in case of disobedience is also noteworthy. The man who disobeys is to be “cut off from his people.” The phrase denotes, apparently, the great excommunication, and is appropriate now that the congregation, or church, has replaced the state..

The “Law of Holiness” makes no distinction between Zadokite priests and ordinary Levites, though this omission may be accidental. But on one point it advances beyond Ezekiel, for it recognises a high-priest. Some chief priest there must always have been at a great shrine: something of the kind was inevitable if order was to be upheld. We read in earlier documents of “the priest,” “the chief priest,” “the second priest,” the subordinates who “kept the threshold.” But the point is, that the “Law of Holiness” distinguishes the high-priest in a way of which we had no previous notice, and which Ezekiel certainly did not contem-

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plate. Other priests may mourn for near relations only: the high-priest may not mourn for any one: even for father or mother he must not incur defilement. He may not marry any woman who is not a virgin and a Jewess. Nevertheless the high priest is still no more than "the great one from among his brethren": he does not as yet claim descent from Aaron, the father of priests, nor has he reached that semi-regal splendour with which he was afterwards invested.

We have seen the prominence Ezekiel gives to the sin- and guilt-offerings. They are absent in the "Law of Holiness," and it is clear that they were unknown, or else passed over of set purpose, since in xvii. 8, xxii. 17, *seq.*, the different kinds of sacrifice are enumerated without a word about sin- or guilt-offering. There are only three feasts, and these preserve strong marks of their agricultural origin. At Passover the priest was to wave a sheaf of the new grain before the altar (xxiii. 10, *seq.*). Pentecost, which Ezekiel omitted, because it did not

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suit his division of the year into two halves, holds important place in the “Law of Holiness.” It is the end of harvest-tide, and part of its celebration consists in the offering of two new loaves. At the great feast of the Ingathering, which was the close of the old Hebrew year, the Jews are to carry branches of trees and to dwell in booths, “that ye may know that the children of Israel dwelt in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.” Here, then, as elsewhere, the “Law of Holiness” marks a transition state. Like Deuteronomy, it assigns no dates for the feasts. How, *e.g.*, could the beginning of harvest be fixed for the same day of the same month in all places and every year? But, unlike Deuteronomy, the law before us gives Tabernacles an historical reference while the sacrifices are offered by the congregation and are no longer left, as in Deuteronomy, to the generosity of individuals. Great stress is laid on the Sabbath, which Deuteronomy never mentions except in the Decalogue. “Keep My Sabbaths:

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I am Jehovah, your God." "Keep My Sabbaths: reverence My sanctuary." On the Sabbath the legislator bases the Sabbatical year, which is really a new institution. True, the "Book of the Covenant" (Exod. xxiii. 10, *seq.*) had laid down the rule that the land was to lie fallow every seventh year. This was in all probability a custom familiar to the Hebrew husbandman, and by no means implied that all land all over the country was to lie fallow at the same time. The author of the "Book of the Covenant" mentions this usage, because he saw that it might be turned to the advantage of the poor. They are to enjoy as their own all the natural growth on the fallow-land, and that would be considerable. In Deuteronomy (xv.) the seventh year has nothing to do with agriculture: it is "a year of release" for debtors and Hebrew slaves. In the "Law of Holiness" the Sabbatical year is one in which all land lies fallow simultaneously, and the humanitarian interest is subordinated to one which is purely theological. "In the seventh year

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shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath unto Jehovah" (xxv. 4). There is no trace of such an institution in pre-exilic history, and as the year of Jubilee would always be preceded by a Sabbatical one, any attempt to reduce the law to practice would have brought on a famine. The Jubilee year just mentioned by anticipation, crowns the whole system of ritual observance in the "Law of Holiness." As Pentecost fell seven weeks after harvest had begun, so the year of jubilee recurs after seven weeks of years, *i.e.* every fiftieth year. Then every man who had sold his land was to resume possession, and all Hebrew slaves were to go free. This law is later than Deuteronomy, for there (xv.; comp. Jer. xxxiv. 14) the Hebrew slave goes free in the "year of release," *i.e.* the seventh year. It is also later than Ezekiel, who makes no reference to a year of jubilee, though he does refer (xlvi. 16) to a year of "liberty," in which year property alienated by the prince to any one except his sons returns to him again. Here we

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seem to have the germ of an idea developed and extended in the "Law of Holiness," probably in a late stratum of that law. The Jubilee year expresses the great ideal that Palestine is Jehovah's land, given in occupation to His people, and so inalienable. That was the theory, but it was a theory which in the very nature of things could never be carried out in practice.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE “PRIESTLY CODE” IN ITS ULTIMATE FORM

EZEKIEL’s plan for the establishment of a new order which was to guard the purity of Israel and secure the permanent abode of Jehovah in the midst of His people was never reduced to practice. The “Law of Holiness” had a better fate, since it became the accepted law of the people after their restoration, but it was deemed insufficient, and was incorporated in a larger and more elaborate code. We have now to explain how it was that this final development of the law came into operation.

*The Restoration under Cyrus, and its Disappointing Character.*—In one particular, and that the most vital, the expectations of the Second Isaiah were fulfilled. In 539 Cyrus took Babylon, and a year later he gave the Israelite exiles leave to return home. He,

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however, displayed none of that zeal against idolatry which the Second Isaiah had attributed to him. On the contrary, he declared himself the chosen servant of Marduk, and he was popular with the Babylonians whom he conquered because he restored the gods to their ancient shrines and reversed the disquieting innovations of Nabonid, the last Babylonian king, who had alienated priests and people by neglect of the feasts and by arbitrary changes in the mode of worship. Nor had the return of the exiles much of the glory and splendour which the Second Isaiah had expected. 42,363 free Israelites, with 7337 slaves, are said to have returned. The proportion of priests (4289) was very great, and we may reasonably infer that the priesthood was not limited, as Ezekiel had desired, but included all who could prove their sacerdotal lineage, whether they were or were not sons of Zadok. Probably only those whose forefathers had left the high places and accepted a subordinate position under the Zadokite priests at Jerusalem were degraded to the rank of mere Levites.

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Much of the ministry which Ezekiel had reserved for the Levites was still committed, as the lists of the returned exiles show, to temple serfs in part of Canaanite origin. The prospects of those Levites, then, were far from brilliant, and only seventy-four of them found their way back. The general management was entrusted to the satrap Sheshbazzar, who has been identified on doubtful grounds with a son of Jehoiachin, the penultimate king of Judah. But the returned exiles were under the immediate care of twelve leaders who may be regarded as representing the twelve tribes, the old ideal unity of Israel, and among them were Zerubbabel, the grandson of Jehoiachin, and Joshua, the grandson of the last man who officiated as chief priest in the old temple. Cyrus had allowed the exiles to take with them the sacred vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away to Babylon. An altar was erected (Ezra iii. 6) and the foundation of a new temple on the time-honoured site was laid by Sheshbazzar (Ezra v. 16). Small progress was made, and the

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little actually done was almost forgotten in the next generation.

*Temple Rebuilt under Darius: Haggai and Zechariah.*—The restoration, such as it was, left the Jews in a miserable state. They only occupied the capital and a narrow circle of land around it. Where were the splendour and the peace which the Second Isaiah had foretold? However, in 520 hope sprang up again. Darius, who had ascended the Persian throne two years before, was still struggling for the possession of an empire which had been rent into fragments by rebels and usurpers. At this crisis two prophets arose, Haggai and Zechariah, and in strange contrast to their pre-exilic predecessors, and even to the Second Isaiah, they summoned the Jews to the great work of rebuilding the temple. Haggai skilfully turned the excuses for leaving the work undone, or doing it remissly, into the strongest arguments for doing it at once and doing it well. True, the Jews were poor and wretched, one bad season had followed another, and their attempts to

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secure their personal comfort had failed miserably. But why? Because they had built houses for themselves and left the house of Jehovah waste. The prophet's behest was done: the foundation of the temple was laid, and, in return, he promised that Jehovah would reward them beyond their utmost desires. "I am with you, saith Jehovah." "From this day will I bless you." More than that. If Jehovah was shaking the whole known earth with civil war, this was but to clear the way for Israel's glorious destiny. Chariots and horses, the strength of heathen nations, were to be destroyed, and precious gifts from all parts of the world were to stream into Jehovah's house. Amidst all foreign commotion peace is the gift Jehovah bestows "in this place," *i.e.* in Jerusalem. Zerubbabel, the Davidic prince, is to be the object of Jehovah's special care. "I will take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, and I will make thee as a seal-ring," which the oriental cherishes with the utmost care and wears on his right hand or on his breast. So Haggai's brief prophecy concludes.

## The “Priestly Code”

Side by side with Zerubbabel stands Joshua the high-priest, a title of which Haggai affords the first authentic instance.

Zechariah began to prophesy in the same year as Haggai but later, and his outlook is different. He sees greater difficulties, but, in spite of them, his hope rose higher than Haggai's and took more definite shape. The angel who spoke to him declared that all the earth was “at rest.” Darius had subdued his foes and held his vast empire in security. Yet, as Jehovah had accomplished the evil foretold by the “former prophets,” so now He would give the promised blessing to His repentant people. It was the high-priest with whom God held the most direct communion, and the Satan, or Adversary—*i.e.* the angel who acted as a sort of public prosecutor in the heavenly court—made charges against him. Nor was this without reason. The bad fortunes of the Jews pointed to something amiss in the high-priest who stood between them and their God. Hence the prophet, in his vision, saw Joshua clad in “filthy garments” (iii.). But

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his raiment was changed, and he was clothed in “rich apparel,” for his sin had passed away. A curse is to search out thieves and perjurers in Jerusalem and to exterminate them. Then “wickedness,” which Zechariah personifies as a woman, is to be carried on the wings of the wind to Babylonia, its appropriate resting-place (v.). Afterwards the Messianic King and the high-priest are to bear sway side by side. “Behold, a man whose name is the Branch:<sup>1</sup> . . . he will build the temple of Jehovah; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and Joshua<sup>2</sup> shall be priest at his right hand: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both” (vi. 13). The exiles are to return from many distant lands: Jerusalem is to overflow with inhabitants, and is to need no ramparts, since Jehovah Himself is to be like a wall of fire around it (ii. 4, 5). “Many peoples and

<sup>1</sup> This Messianic title occurs in Jer. xxiii. 5, xxxiii. 15–26. The latter passage is a very late interpolation. It is absent in the LXX.

<sup>2</sup> The name has fallen out in the Massoretic text. The reading, “at his right hand,” is attested by the LXX.

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strong nations shall come to seek Jehovah of hosts in Jerusalem.” “Ten men out of all the languages of the nations shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”

*Third Isaiah and Malachi.*—Haggai and Zechariah believed that if the temple was restored God would dwell there, and that every blessing material and spiritual would surely follow. This hope was not fulfilled, and two documents, the prophecy of the so-called Malachi and Isa. lvi.—lxvi. (now generally known as the “Third Isaiah”), enable us to understand at once the perplexity and the inextinguishable hope of pious Israelites half a century or more after the temple was rebuilt. Both bear witness to the moral corruption prevalent among the Jews. “Their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands” (Isa. lix. 6). Hence the day of Jehovah was to be a day of judgment for bad Jews and not only for the heathen. “All the proud, and all that work wickedness,

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shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up" (Mal. iv. 1). So far the time of Malachi and "Third Isaiah," reminds us of the pre-exilic prophets. To a large extent their tidings are tidings of woe and not of comfort. They are, however, chiefly interesting, because they show how prophecy, instead of being, as of old, opposed to legal and ritual religion, was being gradually merged in it. The "Third Isaiah" is never more eloquent than when he enlarges on the Sabbath and its obligation (lvi. 2-4) or on the glory of that "house of prayer" which stands on Jehovah's "holy mountain" (lvi. 7, *seq.*). Malachi counts failure to pay tithes (iii. 8), and the contempt shown to the altar by offering worthless animals, among the worst sins of Israel. He has a high ideal of the priestly office, and draws a fine picture of the priest in the good old days. "True instruction was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found in his lips. . . . For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and men seek instruction at his mouth: for he is the messenger of

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“Jehovah of Hosts” (ii. 6, 7). The priests of his own time were many of them degenerate (i. 6–10), and mixed marriages endangered the ritual as well as the moral purity of the people. But of one thing Malachi and the “Third Isaiah” were confident. They were sure that Jehovah would never forsake His people. They could not believe that the terrible teaching of the exile had been in vain: they could not, as Amos had done, contemplate the possibility that Jehovah would abandon His people finally. The Second Isaiah had hoped for much from Cyrus, the mighty conqueror: Malachi and the “Third Isaiah” look to Jehovah alone. It is Jehovah’s own arm that helps him (Isa. lxiii. 5); it is Jehovah Himself who will come “suddenly” to the temple and cleanse His priests and people (Mal. iii. 1). The promised salvation is to extend beyond the limits of the Jewish race. The “Third Isaiah” regards the temple as a “house of prayer for all nations” (lvi. 7); and Malachi, in a passage which stands by itself in the Old Testament (i. 11), recognises the fact that monotheism was spreading

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among the heathen, so that their worship was really offered to a supreme God identical with Jehovah. The principle is not worked out, and is hard to reconcile with the opening words of the prophecy: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

*The Need of a Full and Precise Code.*—Much had been done to establish a new order in Israel during the exile and after it, and yet all attempts so far had been, in part at least, unsuccessful. Ezekiel’s plan had failed because it involved great external changes: it could not be effected, save by miraculous interposition which did not occur. The same thing holds good of all the prophets after the exile. They strove hard to encourage the people on the one hand to renounce their sins, upon the other hand to do good; but they left the rest to God, who would bring it to pass in His own time and in His own way. The “Law of Holiness” did indeed provide a code practical and opportune so far as it went, but it lacked the necessary fulness as also authoritative promulgation and acceptance.

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*Ezra's Arrival at Jerusalem in 458 and his Measures against Mixed Marriages.*—At last, in the fifth century B.C., a decisive change occurred. In 458, Ezra, a priest of Zadokite descent, with the approval of the Persian king, Artaxerxes I., led some fifteen hundred exiles from Babylonia to Jerusalem. Two priestly lines were represented, but it was not without considerable difficulty that Ezra persuaded any Levites to follow him. He set out with lofty hopes, bearing rich offerings for the temple, and declining any military escort from the king in the confidence that “the hand of [his] God [was] upon all them that seek Him for good.” On his arrival, however, he found that grave obstacles awaited him. Ezra had come with a law in his hand which was to regulate the life and worship of the people with a rigour and minuteness of detail hitherto unknown. He saw, however, that no law would be of use, unless there was a people ready to practise it. As a matter of fact, Israel was in imminent danger of perishing utterly by absorption in the surrounding

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nations, and it would have perished but for the repeated interposition of exiles returned from Babylon, whither all that was strongest and best of Judah had gone in 597 and 586. Ezra, as he himself tells us, learned with dismay that "the holy seed had mingled themselves with the peoples of the land: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass" (Ezra ix. 2). The prohibition of such unions in Deut. vii. 3 had been forgotten or ignored even by priests. Partly by the help of the better disposed, partly by threats of confiscation and excommunication, the people were induced to make a solemn covenant, pledging themselves to divorce their foreign wives and the children born of them. Of course, we cannot but feel that such measures were harsh and revolting, and it is interesting to notice that a milder view is represented by the beautiful idyl of Ruth, which in all probability belongs to this time. The book of Ruth appeals indirectly to the fact that foreign marriages were considered lawful in the best days of ancient Israel, and that

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David himself numbered a Moabitess among his ancestors. It is pervaded by a tone of simple piety, and shows in moving words how faithful, kindly, and generous a daughter of Moab could be. Still, we must remember that divorce has always been a comparatively small matter among orientals, and that Ezra was struggling for the very life of his nation. The time required severe measures if the light of Israel was not to die out in the surrounding darkness.

*The Arrival of Nehemiah in 445: he Rebuilds the Walls of Jerusalem.*—There is a long blank in Ezra's memoirs, and in 445 Nehemiah, a cupbearer to Artaxerxes, appears on the scene. He had heard from a kinsman the pitiable state of Jerusalem. Its walls were broken down: its gates burnt. To the ancients a city without walls was not a city at all, and it is easy to understand the prayer of one psalmist, “Build thou the walls of Jerusalem,” or the plaint of another, “Thy servants think upon her stones, and it pitieh them to see her in the dust.” True, Zechariah had declared that

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Jehovah would be a wall of fire round His people, so that they needed no other protection. Nehemiah's view was more practical. He obtained leave of absence from the Persian court, and in characteristic contrast to Ezra he was accompanied by an escort of Persian soldiers. Having reached Jerusalem he found that he had to face the most dangerous opposition from the mixed population which then occupied Palestine. Nothing deterred him: he was well supported by the Jews, who built the walls with arms in their hands, and in fifty-two days the work was done. We are reminded of Themistocles, who in desperate haste rebuilt the Athenian walls before Sparta had time to interfere. The walls being built, Nehemiah induced rich Jews to restore the lands which their poorer brethren had mortgaged, and to liberate Hebrews enslaved for debt.

*Ezra binds the People by Covenant to Observe the Priestly Code and at once Introduces its Observance.—*Thus the foundations of a new order had been laid, and at last Ezra was able to promulgate the law which

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he had brought with him from Babylon. In the autumn of 444 the Levites read the “Book of the Law of Moses to the people.” The hearers mourned and wept as their forefathers had done when for the first time they listened to the Deuteronomic code and contrasted its requirements with their own practice. Next day the reading was continued before the elders in Ezra’s house. The feast of Tabernacles was held in accordance with the “Law of Holiness,” for they dwelt in booths (Lev. xxiii. 42, 43), and with the Priestly Code (xxiii. 39b; contrast 41), for they held a solemn assembly on the eighth day. We are told that no such celebration had been known since the time of Joshua, so that the law, though attributed to Moses, had never been kept before. The prayer in Neh. ix. shows a familiarity with all the sources of the Pentateuch. The people bound themselves to avoid mixed marriages; to keep Sabbaths and other festivals, and the Sabbatical year; to pay the firstfruits, and give the first-born of cattle to the priest; to redeem the first-born of

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men ; to pay tithe to the Levites. From all this it follows that Ezra's reform was based on the Priestly Code. At the same time, that code must have received additions after Ezra's date. Had Ezra known the "Day of Atonement," as it stands in Lev. xvi., to be observed on the tenth of the seventh month, he would not have kept a fast day on the twenty-fourth of that month, passing over the far more solemn rite on the tenth altogether. Again, the people under Ezra agreed to pay yearly one-third of a shekel for the temple service, whereas the Priestly Code (Exod. xxx. 13) seems to demand half a shekel. On the other hand the wood offering (Neh. x. 34) is not mentioned in the Priestly Law.

*The Historical Framework of the Code.*—The "Priestly Code" is evidently intended for the laity, and is by no means a manual confined to the use of priests. Hence it begins with an historical introduction designed to inspire the people with an affectionate reverence for the law by showing how ancient and how divine it is. It gives the origin of sacred institutions : that is the point con-

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stantly in view. All the sacred observances begin at a definite time by divine command. No room is left for imperceptible growth. No change comes by chance or by natural causes. The history is divided into four sections; each has its special ordinances, and the three last are distinguished by three successive covenants between God and man. First we have a history of creation. The author insists on the great religious truth that God brought light out of darkness, order out of confusion. The sun, moon, and stars, which the heathen worshipped as gods, are described as “lamps” (Gen. i. 14) which the one true God hung in the sky to mark times and seasons. Having finished His work in six days, God rested on the Sabbath and “hallowed it,” *i.e.* He gave it an essential and objective sanctity independent of the benefits which, according to the Deuteronomist, it confers on man and beast. Adam is told to increase and multiply: he receives authority over the lower animals, and is to feed on fruit and grain. After a series of genealogies we reach the second

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period, that of the covenant with Noah. In the older account of the Flood a distinction is made between clean and unclean beasts: the Jahvist could not imagine a time in which such a difference was not recognised. The Priestly Writer, however, takes no notice of it in his narrative of the deluge. According to him clean and unclean were separated by a formal law, and that law was given after the Exodus (Lev. xi.). Nor, again, does Noah, as in Gen. viii. 20, offer sacrifice when the Flood is over. How could he, when as yet there was no altar, no priest, no ritual? But Noah receives a command to abstain from the blood of beasts, and not to shed the blood of man: he is allowed to eat flesh meat, and the rainbow is the sign of God's promise never again to send a flood on the earth. Another series of genealogies follows, and then we have the revelation to Abraham. To him God (Elohim) makes Himself known by a new name, that of El Shaddai, which the writer probably took to mean God Almighty. Abraham receives the covenant promise that he is to be the father

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of nations; every male in his family is to be circumcised, and this mark of circumcision is the sign of the covenant between God and Abraham's faithful and legitimate descendants, the Jews. A stress which it is difficult to explain is laid on the fact that Abraham purchased from the children of Heth the cave of Machpelah, in which he buried Sarah, and was afterwards buried himself. The agreement reads like a contract drawn out at length by a lawyer. The common theory that the Priestly Writer claimed the whole of Palestine for his people, because Abraham had acquired the right over a cave near Hebron, is surely quite untenable. It has been conjectured that in Ezra's time the Edomites, who were pushed northwards by Arab invasion, laid claim to the ancient sanctuary of Machpelah and that the Priestly Historian wished to assert the Jewish right to the spot, and to point out that Machpelah was a grave and not a sanctuary. This solution is perhaps the best which can be offered for the present, but has not much positive value.

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Meagre accounts follow of Abraham's son and grandson, Isaac and Jacob. We are told of Jacob's immigration into Egypt, and we have a few particulars from the early life of Moses. To him God reveals His new name Jehovah, and, having delivered the people from Pharaoh's oppression and led them in safety to Sinai, He calls Moses to the Mount and there communicates that elaborate law which was to constitute the last great covenant, the covenant between Jehovah and Israel His people. Up to this point the narrative, with a few exceptions, has been dry and uninteresting. All the beautiful and pathetic stories of Patriarchal times come from older sources and were not adopted by the Priestly Writer. We have very full genealogies, and see how the sacred line is gradually narrowed till it becomes identical with the children of Jacob or Israel. At the same time everything which might scandalise the strict Jews of Ezra's time has vanished. Lot and Abraham part company without any sign of quarrel between their shepherds. The dangerous ad-

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ventures of Sarah and Rebekah are passed over in silence. Jacob travels to Aram Naharaim to seek a wife, not to escape the vengeance of Esau, whom he has outwitted, and the two brothers peacefully bury their father Isaac. Again, the Patriarchs are never brought into contact with sacred stones or trees: indeed they do not sacrifice at all, because as yet Jehovah has not pointed out the place of sacrifice, given the measurements of altar and tabernacle, or prescribed the details of the ritual to be observed. The principle has already been illustrated in the case of Noah. Thus the Patriarchs enjoyed religious privileges much like those of pious Jews at Babylon. They had the knowledge of the one true God, the maker of all things: they had the sign of circumcision and the covenant to which it pointed: possibly they observed the Sabbath, and certainly they knew that they were the chosen seed, the heirs of the promise.

*The Ritual Law.*—We may now pass to the consideration of that ritual law which is the basis of the final covenant between

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Jehovah and Israel. It includes the older law given to Noah, which prohibited murder and the eating of blood: it also includes the law of circumcision given to Abraham. With these exceptions everything is Mosaic. Ezekiel acknowledged that he was pleading for ordinances unknown before: the Priestly Code carries back the innovations for which Ezekiel contended to the very infancy of the nation.

(1) *The Place of Sacrifice.*—This characteristic appears most clearly when we look to the law on the place of sacrifice. In Deut. xii. 8–11, which professes to be written at the close of the wanderings in the desert, there is a frank admission that sacrifice, so far, had not been confined to a single place. In the Priestly Code, on the contrary, the tabernacle is erected before sacrifice of any kind is offered. Each part corresponded in the minutest detail to the pattern which Jehovah showed Moses on the Mount. It was “the tent of meeting,” because there God imparted His will to Moses and, through Moses, to Israel. Round it was a

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court 100 cubits long by 50 broad, with the altar and the laver: the tent, or tabernacle proper, was divided into the holy place, with the candelabrum on the south, the table of show-bread on the north side, and the holy of holies parted off by a curtain, within which were the mercy-seat, the ark, and the cherubim. The Priestly Writer does not, like the Deuteronomist, insist that sacrifice can be offered nowhere else: he takes that for granted. To him the tabernacle is the one centre of religious life: therefore it stands appropriately in the middle of the camp, guarded by a cordon of priests and Levites. The Levites transport the component parts of the structure and its furniture, but even they must not take the sacred vessels into their hands till the priests have wrapped them up in cloth. The holy place is accessible to priests alone: only the high-priest may enter the holy of holies, and he but once a year. Here two points should be observed, because they have an important bearing on the history of religion. The tabernacle, in the view of

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an older writer in Exod. xxxiii. 7, *seq.*, stood, as has been already said, outside of the camp, with Joshua, a layman, to keep guard within it. This statement is, of course, directly contrary to that of the Priestly Writer. Next, the tabernacle, as he conceives it, is unknown to the historical books of the Old Testament except Chronicles. Thus Solomon is said, in 1 Kings iii. 1-15, to have sacrificed at Gibeon, because the temple was not built. Why not before the tabernacle, as indeed the Chronicler tells us he did? (2 Chron. 1, 3.) The shrine at Shiloh was not a tent but a house (Jer. vii. 12, 14, xxvi. 6) with door-posts (1 Sam. 1, 9). For a time the ark wandered from place to place, evidently because it had no fixed abode, till David (2 Sam. vii. 2) made a tent for it. It may be objected that the "tent of meeting" is mentioned in 1 Sam. ii. 22. This objection, however, becomes an argument on the other side when we find that the words in question are absent in the LXX. We are then justified in concluding that the picture which the Priestly Writer drew is an ideal

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one, though the simpler tent outside the camp may very well be a genuine and historical reminiscence.

(2) *The Priests and Levites.* — We have another mark of late origin in the account given of those who officiate in the Sanctuary. The distinction which Ezekiel proposed to make between priests and Levites is assumed throughout: it is carried back to Moses, with whom sacrifice begins. This genealogy starts not as in Ezekiel from Zadok, Solomon’s contemporary, but from Aaron, the brother of Moses. Nor do the priests, in any sense, emerge from the mass of Levites. Far from this: first of all the priests are consecrated (Lev. viii.—x.): after that, in Num. iii. and xviii., we are told of the Levites and their duties. They are a gift to Aaron and his sons, and, according to one stratum of the document before us, represent the first-born of Israel. Their functions are subordinate, but our author does not dream that they have been degraded to the position which they hold. On the contrary, it is one of great honour. The word Levite

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has almost lost its genealogical meaning, though Aaron belongs to the tribe of Levi, and the two words, “priests” and “Levites,” are carefully distinguished. This terminology is an advance not only upon Ezekiel, but even on Malachi, who always speaks like Deuteronomy and Ezekiel of “the priests the Levites,” *i.e.* “the Levitical priests.”

(3) *The High-priest.* — At the head of the clergy stands the great, or high, priest, who makes his first and modest appearance in the “Law of Holiness,” as well as in Haggai and Zechariah. He is now regarded as the first-born in the family of Aaron, and he alone bears the Urim and Thummim: he alone offers for the sins of the whole people: he alone enters the holy of holies. He is “the anointed one,” a title given of old to the kings of Israel and by the Second Isaiah to Cyrus: he wears a diadem: he is clad in purple: his succession to office marks an epoch in national history; for it is then that the involuntary homicide may quit the city of refuge and return home. In Ezekiel the “prince” is a pale reflection

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of the Hebrew monarchs. In the Priestly Code there is neither king nor prince, for Israel has ceased to be a nation, and a native king, now that the whole attention was concentrated upon worship and ritual purity, would have been sadly in the way. When, long afterwards, the Maccabean priests became, first in effect and then by title, kings of Judah, they were necessarily secularised, and their compromise with the heathen world brought on them the hatred of the Chasidim (*i.e.* the pious), and, afterwards, of the Pharisees (*i.e.* of those who carefully separated themselves from heathen pollution). Similarly the Scotch Covenanters found the wise and equal rule of William III. intolerable. They desired “a covenanted king,” bound heart and soul to Presbyterian interests, and in effect no king at all. It was far better for strict Jews that Persians, Greeks, and Romans should take the responsibility of secular authority and leave devout Israelites free to meditate day and night upon the holy law. Within these limits the quasi-regal supremacy of the high-priest could

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be safely exercised. With war and foreign diplomacy they had no concern. We have an interesting token of the change which had come over the spirit of Israel, in the fact that the old Hebrew word for the shout or blast of war is used in the Priestly Code for the blast of the trumpet on the feast of the New Year (Num. xxix. 1), thence called “the feast of a blast.”

(4) *Priestly and Levitical Revenues.*—The priestly revenues were greatly enlarged. The priest (Num. xviii.) was to have the flesh of the sin- and guilt-offerings, which had not been recognised in the older legislation. Whereas in Deuteronomy (xii. 6, 7), the first-born of clean animals were to be sacrificed at Jerusalem, the priest having at most a claim to share in the feast, the first-born of clean animals was now assigned to him as his property, provided he sprinkled the blood and burned the fat (Num. xviii. 15, *scq.*), and he was to receive an equivalent for the flesh of unclean firstlings. The tithes of vegetable produce also became part of the clerical income: they were to be

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handed over to the Levites, who in their turn gave a tithe of their tithe to the Aaronic priests (Num. xviii. 8, *seq.*). This is very different from the Deuteronomic rule (xiv. 22, *seq.*), that tithes were to be spent by the lay Israelite in sacrificial feasts at Jerusalem, except every third year, when they were to be eaten at home, the poor, and among them the Levites, being invited to the banquet. Add to this that the priest got the shoulder and breast of peace-offerings, most of the vegetable oblations, and the hides of whole burnt-offerings. It will be convenient to mention here the most startling addition made to the priestly and Levitical income, though in all probability it belongs to a secondary development of priestly legislation. Forty-eight cities (Num. xxxv. ; Joshua xxi.) are handed over to the tribe of Levi, each enclosed within a square of pasture land measuring 2000 ells each way. Of these thirteen, situated in Judah, were to be the special property of the priests. This enactment is in direct opposition to Deut. xviii. 1,

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which declares that the Levites are to have no territorial possession, but, on the contrary, are to "sojourn" (xviii. 6) among men of other tribes. Plainly Ezekiel had never heard of it, otherwise he would not have propounded a scheme which placed the Levites on a single district of land where they were to dwell together. The plan proposed in the Priestly Code is historically, and even physically, impossible. Some of the Levitical cities, notably Gezer, did not come into Israelite hands till a late period. If we turn to the names of the cities in Joshua xxi. and look at their place in the map, we see that some lay very near each other, and it has been asserted that the territory assigned by law to one would have overlapped that which was given to another. This, it is said, would have been the case with Hebron and Holon, Anathoth and Almon, while the pasture-land allotted to Hammoth-dor would have in part to be taken from the Sea of Galilee.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This statement is made in Nowack's Hebr. Archäol. ii. 129.

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At the same time the Levitical cities may have arisen from the recollection of a time when towns all over the country had their shrines, the priests holding a prominent position among the town folk. Partly, too, the priestly legislature may have been influenced by Ezekiel’s proposal to establish priests and Levites on land round the temple. The motive, however, in the Priestly Code is different. Its main purpose is to secure ample provision for the clergy, and except that the territory of the priests is confined to Judah, the advantage of the temple does not occupy the writer’s mind.

(5) *The Kinds of Sacrifice.*—In ancient times the peace-offering, in which the man who offered the victim and his friends consumed the greater part of the victim, was the accepted type of all sacrifice. So much is clearly proved by the use of the Hebrew word “*Zebah*,” which means sacrifice in general, and then specially peace-offerings. In the “Priestly Code,” on the contrary, the whole burnt-offering, in which, of course, the offerer could not partake, is

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recognised as the common form of oblation, and therefore the altar is called either simply "the altar," or else "the altar of whole burnt-offering." A lamb is to be offered as a holocaust twice a day, and not merely in the morning, as Ezekiel xlvi. 13-15 had laid down. Great prominence is given to the sin-offering, with which the guilt-offering—which, however, is seldom mentioned, and then only in secondary strata of the Code—is closely allied. The sin-offering formed an integral part of the worship at the new moon, and on the three great feasts. It formed part of the rite for consecrating priests and high-priests, and it was only with the blood of the sin-offering that the priest dared to enter the inner sanctuary. Clearly, the exile which was attributed to the divine wrath had intensified the sense of sin. At first the efficacy of the sin-offering was limited to offences committed "unwittingly." "The soul that doeth aught with a high hand . . . that soul shall be cut off from his people" (Num. xv. 30). But in practice

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the ideal of a people which never transgressed deliberately could not be maintained. Hence in secondary strata of the law a guilt-offering makes atonement for serious moral offences, such as robbery and oppression, provided restitution is made (Lev. vi. 1, *seq.*), and incense appeases the anger of God (Num. xvi. 46) when the people are on the point of rebellion against Moses and Aaron. This ritual culminates in the great Day of Atonement, “the day” (Yoma) by pre-eminence as it was called in post-biblical days. So (but with how vast a difference!) Easter-day is to Christians the day of days, “the day which the Lord hath made.”

(6) *Feasts*.—The annual feasts stand much as they did in Ezekiel. Their number is increased to five by addition of New Year’s day, known as the feasts of Trumpets and the great Day of Atonement. All of them are to begin on specified days of the month, while Passover, conjoined with the feast of unleavened bread, and Tabernacles were now to be kept for eight days instead of seven. The monthly feast of New Moon, which

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went back to a prehistoric period, but had been passed over in the Book of the Covenant and Deuteronomy, is restored to its former dignity. The change is a puzzling one. We may, perhaps, suppose that it had been dropped because of its heathen association and was restored by the "Priestly Code," as by Ezekiel, partly because it had struck deep root in the heart of the people, and partly because it had a new importance now that the annual feasts were held on fixed dates. The absolute rest of the Sabbath was enforced with a strictness (Exod. xvi. 27, *seq.*, xxxi. 12, *seq.*) hitherto unknown; so that death was the penalty for breaking it. Moreover, the Sabbath is developed into the Sabbatical or seventh year, when the land throughout Palestine was to rest, and after seven weeks of years came the year of Jubilee, when the land was to rest as on the Sabbatical year, all Hebrew slaves were to go free, and every Israelite who had sold his land was to return to the possession of his fathers. This is a purely theoretical development of

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the Sabbath. Had it been carried out, then, as has been already shown, there would have been no sowing or reaping in the forty-ninth year: no sowing or reaping on the fiftieth, and, in consequence, nothing to reap on the fifty-first. We may here note another change which is of one piece with those already mentioned. The sacrifices, once left to the generosity of individuals, were now offered in the name of the whole congregation, so that in Num. xxviii. and xxix. we have an elaborate scale of sacrifices adapted to the five feasts.

(7) *Later Strata of the Priestly Law.*—The Priestly Code was the work of a school, not of an individual, and something has been said by the way on additions made to it as time went on. Some of the newer laws must have been intended to increase the solemnity of worship. The early stages of the Code know of one altar only, viz. that of whole burnt-offering. This is called “the altar” (Exod. xxvii.), and in the orders given by God for the construction of the Tabernacle (xxv.—xxix.) no other is men-

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tioned. But another altar, that of incense, is introduced in an appendix (Exod. xxx.), and it became of great importance in the appointed ritual. Thus in a sin-offering for the high-priest or the whole congregation the blood was sprinkled on its horns, whereas the blood of a sin-offering for a ruler or common Israelite did not come within the sanctuary. The Day of Atonement with its solemn observances is also later than Ezra and Nehemiah, to whom, as we have seen, it was unknown, though it is earlier than the sections which mention the altar of incense, and probably contains a kernel which formed part of the primary Code. Again, there are additions which seem to be intended for the priests, and are somewhat out of place in a book designed for lay and popular use. The elaborate scale of sacrifices in Num. xxviii., xxix., the rules for the valuation of persons and things in Lev. xxvii., the casuistical decisions on cases of restitution to the sanctuary in Num. v. 5-10, the rules for persons unable to keep Passover on the proper day (Num. ix.

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6-14) may be taken as illustrations of this tendency. Lastly, we have one significant change which greatly increased clerical revenues. The tithes levied at first on vegetable produce only (Num. xviii. 21-30) were extended (Lev. xxvii. 32) to cattle. The reader must remember that we have given no more than samples of additions to the law. Some of them occur in the form of narratives which accentuate the severity of the law (Lev. xxiv. 10-14, 23; Num. xv. 32-36), or attempt to reconcile contradictions in the various strata (Lev. x. 16-20).

*Ancient Elements in the Priestly Code.*—The Priestly Code, as we have it, is post-exilic, but the matter may be, and sometimes undoubtedly is, far more ancient. Much of the ritual in all probability represented the time-honoured usage of Solomon's temple, which, after that temple perished, had to be written down by the exiles before it was forgotten. Not unfrequently the Priestly Code reverts to practices of primitive antiquity which were anterior even to the worship of Jehovah. To this class we

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may confidently refer the distinction between clean and unclean food (Lev. xi.), the trial by ordeal of a suspected wife (Num. v. 11, *seq.*), the bird that carried the impurity of the leper (Lev. xiv.), the goat for Azazel (Lev. xvi.), the ashes of the red cow, used for purification (Num. xix.), perhaps, too, the bells on the high-priest's robe (Exod. xxviii. 34, 35). The monotheistic sense of the nation had grown strong, and enabled Israel to adopt such usages without danger to the exclusive worship of Jehovah. The law was not enforced without a struggle. Even after the people of Jerusalem had entered into covenant with their God, Nehemiah had to continue the struggle against foreign marriages, profanation of the Sabbath, and laxity even on the part of the priests. Still in the end, and at no long interval, the law was enforced.

*The Struggle for Strict Observance Assisted by Secession of Jews to Samaria.*—The secession of some Jews to Samaria helped, no doubt, the victory of the stricter party at Jerusalem. Unfortunately there is some uncertainty about

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the date at which the Samaritan community was reinforced from Judah. The bulk of the population certainly consisted of Israelites mixed with foreigners deported thither by Assyrian kings after the fall of Samaria in 721. This heterogeneous population practised, though not exclusively, the worship of Jehovah, and were even instructed in the technicalities of the ritual by priests (so we should read 2 Kings xvii. 27) who had been carried captive from north Israel. Afterwards they strove, though in vain, to share in the rebuilding of the temple, and revenged themselves by intrigues against the party of reform. They must have been able to reckon on a certain amount of sympathy at Jerusalem. We learn from Neh. xiii. 28 that no less a person than the son of Joiada the priest had married a daughter of a chief Samaritan, Sanballat. Now Josephus relates that a certain Manasses, a son of the high-priest Jaddua, married the daughter of a Samaritan, Sanballat. Being compelled to choose between his wife and his priesthood at Jerusalem, he preferred the former,

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and having accepted Sanballat's invitation to Samaria, officiated as priest and founded a community there. Evidently there is some confusion in the narrative, for Sanballat flourished a hundred years and more before Jaddus, or Jaddua, who was contemporary with Alexander the Great. Perhaps it is easiest to suppose that Manasses emigrated in Nehemiah's time; that the Samaritan temple was built in 332, and that Josephus has placed together two events separated by a long interval of time. Anyhow we are justified in regarding Samaria as a refuge for lax and discontented Jews whose withdrawal smoothed the way for strict observance at Jerusalem. The Samaritan still possess and reverence a copy of the Pentateuch in Hebrew, which is substantially identical with the Pentateuch as accepted by the Jews. This, of course, implies that the Priestly Code, when the Samaritans accepted it, had already received its final additions, and had been united with the older documents, viz. Deuteronomy and the Elohist and Jahvist histories. It is uncertain

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when this union was effected, and our imperfect information on the precise date at which the Pentateuch was received among the Samaritans does not give much help in settling the question. The Chronicler, writing about 250 B.C., shows his acquaintance with the Pentateuch in its present form. For an earlier date we have no positive proof, though it is very likely that the Priestly Law, soon after Ezra had imposed it on the people, was united with Deuteronomy, which had long been acknowledged as Mosaic and canonical, as also with the still older documents which had long enjoyed wide popularity.

*The Pentateuch and its Canonisation.*—We are now in a position from which we may try to sum up the spiritual worth of Jewish religion in this its final stage. Israel had come to regard all duty to God and man as a matter of legal obligation. The very history of the word “torah” helps us to realise this. Originally it was the technical term for the decision which priests at the sanctuary gave from time to time by means

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of the sacred lot. As the Hebrews formed a higher conception of divine things, the name was given to that revelation of Himself and of His will which God imparted through the prophets, and generally to the whole body of prophetic teaching. It was, however, supposed, and to some extent rightly, that the principles of prophetic religion were embodied, explained, and applied in detail to the daily conduct of worship and life by the legal codes, and at last "torah" came to mean neither more nor less than the Pentateuch, of which legal enactments make the greater part, while the narrative portions were looked upon as introductions to, or illustrations of, the law. It was this torah or law consisting of the Pentateuch which was first set apart from other literature, and acknowledged as the Bible of the Jewish Church. At a date which cannot now be ascertained, but which may be placed approximately about 200 B.C., the prophetic writings, including certain historical books, viz., Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, were added to the canon. The prophetic

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literature was placed on a lower plane. The Torah was the Bible in the highest and strictest sense: the prophetic books were valued because, as it was thought, they contained exhortations to earnest observance of the Torah. Later still, other books of a mixed character (Psalms, Job, &c.) were added to the list, and somewhere in the first century of our era the Jewish Bible was complete. The order just given is not the chronological one, for in point of time the prophets preceded the law. But in order of canonisation the prophetic books are later, not earlier than the law, and their position as compared with that of the law is subordinate.

*Defects of Legal Religion.*—Legalism or nomistic religion is in its own nature imperfect. Law is in its place when it defines the coarser relations of life. It does its appointed work when it regulates, *e.g.*, the power of the magistrate in a constitutional government, or the amount of taxation to be levied from subjects, or commercial treaties between individuals or states. It is far less

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fit to settle relations of a more intimate and delicate kind. What law can say how a man is to behave to his friends, what sacrifices he is bound to make for country or parents or wife and children? Much less is it the function of law to determine the duty of man to God. The New Testament view is expressed in our Lord's words, "When ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which it was our duty to do." This is the principle maintained by the New Testament. A man enters on the way of salvation by faith, *i.e.* by the joyful surrender of himself to God the Father as manifested in His coequal Son. That, however, is not the legal aspect of religion. There certain definite duties are prescribed: he who does them may expect the divine blessing; he who does them not, God's curse. Hence in the later Jewish Church men, to judge at least by the Book of Psalms, were constantly swaying between two poles of thought. Either they felt that they had fulfilled the law, and then judged by

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the Christian standard they were unduly self-complacent, or else outward misfortunes were taken to be the punishment of some, perhaps, involuntary transgression, since the most careful could never be sure that they had fulfilled each and all of the law's numerous and minute requirements, and might, therefore, easily fall into despair. This suggests another defect in the legal religion of the Jews. It reiterated promises of prosperity in case of faithful observance, and of ruin in case of neglect or defiant disobedience. This promise was limited to the life that now is, for the law never refers to the life of the world to come. The Book of Job bears striking witness to the agony a good man might undergo when grievous suffering fell upon him, and the accepted morality of the time explained all exceptional suffering as the effect of abnormal sin successfully concealed from man, but open before the eyes of God. Further, the law made no distinction between moral and ceremonial precepts. This is abundantly plain not only because this modern distinction

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is never even in the slightest degree recognised, but also because the most solemn appeals are made over and over again to the holiness of God, and the holiness which He requires from His worshipper in order to enforce rules destitute of moral import. Thus to take one out of very many examples, the elaborate law in Lev. xi. which prohibits eating unclean animals or even touching some of them, ends with these solemn words: “Ye shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth. . . . For I am Jehovah your God: sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that moyeth upon the earth. For I am Jehovah that brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” A dangerous development of the law on another side has been pointed out already. Ritual came to be accepted as an atonement for real guilt, though it would be unjust to suppose that the law at any state of its formation accepted it as a substitute for repent-

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ance and amendment. It had a mystic and sacramental efficacy; but this was not operative apart from righteousness of life.

*The Merits of the Law.*—Such seem to be the chief disadvantages of nomistic religion, and it is time to speak of the signal benefits which, in the case of the Jewish religion, more than counterbalance them. We must not forget that the Priestly Code never enjoyed sole authority. Deuteronomy, with the beauty of its prophetic spirit, still held its authoritative place, and the kindly lessons of the law of holiness were incorporated from the first in the Priestly Code. Soon, too, the earlier documents, those of the Jahvist and Elohist, with their legends of incomparable beauty and pathos, became component parts of the law, so that the religion of Israel, even if for the moment we put prophets and psalmists out of count, was very far indeed from being a merely ritual system. It is to be observed that the law in all its forms laid a stress, unparalleled elsewhere, on the duty of helping poor fellow-countrymen. Even Christian politicians have

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still much to learn from the ideal which the law-givers of the Pentateuch set before themselves, the ideal, that is to say, of a whole nation devoted to the will of its God and receiving in turn a blessing which the humblest individual was to share. Nor must we forget the singular purity of family life which the law maintained. It is true that the position of Hebrew women was far from satisfactory. Polygamy really freed the husband from any obligation of fidelity to his wife, and adultery was regarded simply as an injury to the husband of the guilty woman, though, of course, the injury to the husband was also a sin against God. But at least the end for which the prophets had struggled long and hard, viz. the exclusion of licentious rites from the worship of Jehovah, was in the end completely attained. Moreover, in common life the unspeakable abominations which were usual and familiar among surrounding Semites, and among the Greeks when they had reached the acme of culture and refinement, were strictly reprobated and prohibited in Israel. The table

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of prohibited degrees was a protection against incestuous unions and, on the whole, the Jew might congratulate himself on the purity of family life which distinguished his nation. The horror which the pious Jew felt for the Greek was due partly to this cause.

A frequent objection has been made to the law, on the ground that it taught men to practise virtue for an external and material reward, to be paid upon performance. On this it is to be remarked, first of all, that our Lord Himself promises rewards to the obedient, nor are those rewards always and without exception spiritual and eternal. No doubt such blessings as those of “the basket and store” are characteristic of the Old Testament. Still, in matter of fact such virtues as temperance and industry do, as a rule, meet with recompense of this nature, and a God who so ruled the world as to make no material difference between just and unjust would have no claim to be regarded as the righteous judge of all. Moreover, in expecting temporal blessings,

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the “old fathers” did not look only to “transitory promises.” They sought in temporal blessing assurance of God’s favour to them, and of the fact that all was well with Jehovah’s faithful servants. This is admirably stated by the eminent Jewish writer, Mr. Montefiore. “Piety,” he writes, “cannot maintain itself if God makes no difference between the guilty and the godly, and has nothing more to say to the one than to the other: for piety is not content to stretch out its hands to the empty air, it must meet an arm descending from heaven. It needs a reward not for the reward’s sake, but in order to be sure of its own reality, in order to know that there is a communion of God with man.” There is nothing in this inconsistent with the belief that God’s mercy is over all His works, and that He causes His rain to descend and His sun to shine on the evil as well as upon the good.

The law conferred a further benefit by expressing, and by the very expression deepening the sense of sin, and so preparing

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the way for the advent of a mediator. St. Paul has drawn a vivid picture of his struggles to observe the law, and his despair when he had to acknowledge that his inability to keep it, exposed him to the wrath of God. St. Paul, of course, with his spirit “keen and high,” and his intense thirst for righteousness, cannot be taken as a representative of ordinary experience, even among devout Israelites. To them the law was a delight, and they would have re-echoed the enthusiastic language of the Psalmist—“O, how I love Thy law, all the day long my study is it.” And this love of the law, no less than St. Paul’s sense of the law’s impotence to save, had its evangelical side. The law was quite another thing from moral precepts, *e.g.* those of the Stoics. Israel had not invented or discovered it: it was Jehovah’s gift to the people which He had chosen to be His own. It was the mark and efficacious sign of His grace, so that to love the law was, in effect, to love Him. The Jewish writer just quoted has compared the love and mediation of the

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law with the love and mediation of our Lord. There is little need to dwell on the infinite gulf which separates such a personification of the law from faith in the ever-living Christ. Yet even in this respect the law, though it “brought nothing to perfection,” was the *σκιὰ τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν*, “the shadow of the good things that were to come.”

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